Romy Schneider and transeuropean stardom
an analysis of a European star's image and acting style

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ROMY SCHNEIDER AND TRANS-EUROPEAN STARDOM

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AN ANALYSIS OF A EUROPEAN STAR'S IMAGE AND ACTING STYLE

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March 2019

Thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor in Philosophy

ABSTRACT

My thesis explores the career and star image of Austrian-born actress Romy Schneider who, from the mid-1950s to the early 1980s, was a major star in continental Europe (though not in Anglo-American culture). Schneider's career raises many key questions about female stardom, European identities and exportability, and yet she has been largely ignored in scholarly work. She was propelled to stardom with the role of Elisabeth of Austria in the popular *Sissi* trilogy (Ernst Marischka, 1955, 1956, 1957), which lastingly established her early star image. However, her evolving roles – sweet Viennese girl, *Parisienne*, and 'modern' woman – together with her acting choices, events in her private life and directions within European cinema, divided her career into three major phases. This is why I structure my study into three main chapters as well.

This first part focuses on the construction of Schneider's persona at the beginning of her career in West German and Austrian cinemas that culminated with the *Sissi* series. I discuss how her star image developed with regards to three aspects – the on- and off-screen mother-daughter relationship (with her own mother who influenced her casting as the ingénue heroine), her identification with the romantic costume genre, and the ideological component of Schneider's persona in relation to the historical context of post-war West Germany and Austria. The second part is dedicated to Schneider's international phase during which she tried to make her mark in international film and projected a glamorous feminine image. This section also focuses on her collaboration with Luchino Visconti and on Schneider's identification with a paradoxical form of trans-European stardom, i.e. her 'exoticism', or her capacity to embody several national representations without at the same time fully embracing one. I conclude Part II with an analysis of the French film *La Piscine* (Jacques Deray, 1969) after which she relocated to France and 'reinvented' her image which took a more complex and dramatic turn. The third part deals with Schneider's successful French career in the 1970s and early 1980s and the image she developed in popular auteur cinema, especially the films of Claude Sautet, which combined sensuality, vulnerability and bourgeois identity. I look at the tension between Schneider's star image and societal changes linked to the rising women's movement and with the projection of her tragic Germanness in French films about the German Occupation, as well as with the morbid dimension of her last films. In trying to understand Schneider's successful French career, this section also considers the echoes between her screen image, performance style and the tragic events of her later personal life.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My deepest gratitude and most sincere thanks to my supervisor Ginette Vincendeau. Her brilliance, motivation and encouragement have inspired me and taught me to be a better researcher, writer, teacher, and feminist. This thesis truly is a collaborative work between our two minds and sensitivities. She has been at my side every step of the way and helped me overcome every obstacle and any slip of confidence. During our meetings in London and Paris we discussed Romy Schneider's roles, career, and taste in men for hours, which always left my brain fired up and my spirits lifted. She is simply the best and I am proud to have been her student.

I would also like to thank my second supervisor Erica Carter, whose advice and guidance were paramount in my study of Schneider's Austrianness, and to the academic staff and PhD students in the Film Studies department at KCL. Special thanks to Elizabeth, Tessa, Alice, Jenny, Anna, Eleonora, Joe A., Simon, Karolina, and Joe J. for being pillars of laughter and support.

To the fantastic Jen and Kiki for letting me stay in Paris for research and patisseries.

To my girlfriends: Amandine, Camille, Loulou, Carolane. Thanks for being the most wonderful confidantes and listening to me perorate about Schneider, films, and feminism.

To my grandparents, for their love and words of wisdom, and for introducing me to *Sissi* before I could even walk.

And finally, to my wonderful parents, my sisters (and Poppy) for being my rock and first cheerleaders.

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INTRODUCTION

My thesis is an examination of the career and star image of Austrian-born actress Romy Schneider who was a major film star in continental Europe from the mid-1950s to the early 1980s. Upon the discovery of her death (aged 43) on the morning of 29th May 1982 by her companion in their Parisian apartment, the police found a letter on her desk (she was cancelling a photoshoot and an interview), with a long stroke of ink suggesting that she had collapsed from heart failure while writing, but also red wine and pills, which could suggest that she had, voluntarily or not, overdosed. Yet, public prosecutor Laurent Davenas closed the case and Schneider's body was not autopsied for he did not want 'to destroy the myth' as he later explained (Lelait-Helo, 2017, p. 301). The details of the previous anecdote vary according to the many writers and journalists who wrote on the life, career and death of Schneider, but analysing the various elements and meanings constitutive of this particular star 'myth' is the goal set for the present study. Davenas continued: 'Sissi was not supposed to embark on her last voyage to the Quai de la Rapée [the Forensic Institute in Paris]. I could not bring myself […] to turn her into a carcass' (Bertrand, 20/05/1998). His comments give us valuable information: first, they attest to the importance of Schneider's star status at that point and of her perception as a tragic and 'untouchable' woman to which her early death significantly contributed; secondly, Davenas does not name Schneider but designates her by one of her most enduring and beloved character – Sissi. Schneider was indeed propelled into stardom with the role of Empress Elisabeth of Austria – also known as Sissi – in the *Sissi* trilogy (Ernst Marischka, 1955, 1956, 1957), the popularity of which firmly and lastingly established her star image. The latter changed significantly over the course of her career, from the Viennese ingénue to the *Parisienne* and later the 'modern' and then 'tragic' woman. Those changes occurred in conjunction with her acting choices, events in her private life, and directions within European cinema, that led her career into three main directions. The first concerns the early years marked by her mother, the German actress Magda Schneider who influenced her casting as the young and romantic heroine in German and Austrian films. After a few years of decline intersected with international roles, Romy Schneider reinvented her career and her persona when she relocated to France and became one of the most famous 'French' stars of the 1970s.

Today, Schneider continues to be one of the most popular stars in the history of European cinema and she is still widely celebrated by fans, *cinephiles*, and members of the film industry alike. There are numerous indicators of Schneider's lasting popularity throughout Europe – retrospectives, publications, fan clubs, anniversary celebrations, documentaries and so on – and I will return to her legacy in the conclusion. Yet, the starting point for this thesis is that, despite her outstanding career as a film actress, and despite the fact that, as we will see, her persona raises many important questions about female stardom, European and trans-European identities and exportability, Schneider has been surprisingly neglected in scholarly studies. My aim is to analyse Schneider's career, persona and performance style so as to place her within a range of European female stars, particularly Germanic and French, who defined cultural and ideological images of femininity on European screens. Schneider started working at the age of 15 and her career spanned three decades of European cinema, while she also worked in the US. But whereas individual articles and book chapters have underlined some aspects of her significance (see section 7 of my review of literature), no scholarly work has considered the entire trajectory of her career, nor examined the development of her on- and off-screen persona within the context of European cinema history, as well as feminist and gender studies. With this thesis, I aim to redress this imbalance. I am using the case of Schneider and her move (both in terms of production and reception) from Austria, Germany, and Hollywood, to France in order to explore questions of trans-European and transnational stardom, hoping that my thesis will make a valuable intervention in this growing field within star studies. I aim to show how the representations of women stemming from Schneider's star image supported specific and shifting cultural and social agendas regarding femininity, over the three decades of her career. I want to understand the significance of Schneider's image both when she was working and since, within Western European film culture and, more recently, celebrity culture.

* * *

Methodology and corpus

My examination of Schneider's trans-European star image is firstly based on close textual analysis. Each of Schneider's films is looked at in detail, with attention paid to performance and other mise-en-scène elements (costume, lighting, composition, production design, makeup and hairstyle), dialogue and music. By analysing the form of

Schneider's films, as well as their narrative and character construction, I look at how a feminine image is established on screen, and how Schneider's characters within her films construct different ideologies of womanhood at particular historical moments. An important part of my research concentrates on Schneider's mechanics of acting and, following methods established by scholars such as Richard Dyer and James Naremore (see section 2 of my review of literature), I analyse closely her facial features and expressions, her voice and accent, her gestures, gait, posture and movements. I aim to find what is specific about her by analysing the construction of her screen presence and the nuances of her performance style. Next, I engage with critical theories within film studies to understand the framework within which Schneider is evolving, and I make use of three prominent fields throughout for the analysis of Schneider's persona: star studies, gender studies, and European film history.

The corpus of films analysed in my study consists of Schneider's complete filmography (most of her films are available on DVD in their original language, sometimes with English subtitles), that is 63 films released from 1953 to 1982, which includes two TV films and one documentary. While every film has been viewed, some are briefly considered while others have been selected for deeper analysis as the most representative of the star's evolution (according to criteria explained in each chapter). I also refer to films outside Schneider's filmography, from the 1920s to the present day, such as the original versions of the remakes in which Schneider starred in the 1950s and the films (and star personas) of European female stars contemporaneous with Schneider along the years (in particular Hildegard Knef, Brigitte Bardot, Anna Karina, Jeanne Moreau, Catherine Deneuve, Annie Girardot, Hannah Schygulla, Isabelle Adjani), for comparative purposes in order to historicise Schneider's career and persona within the canon of European film history. I look at other films by European and Hollywood directors with whom Schneider worked in order to evaluate her impact as a performer and as a star on their collaborations, as well as other auteur and popular films to situate and contextualise Schneider's work and representation of femininity over time (the evolution of Occupation films in France since the end of World War II in chapter 2 of Part III for example).

Beyond the films, the printed media coverage that built Schneider's star image is amply analysed throughout this thesis (promotional material, reviews, articles and photographs published in the press at the time), examining material from Austria, Germany, France, Belgium, Netherlands, Italy, Spain, the UK, and the US. I also made

use of archival material such as private correspondence, production notes, and original drafts of scripts. I have found a substantial amount of such material in libraries and archives in film institutes in Paris, Berlin, Vienna, London and Lausanne, and at the Bibliothèque nationale de France in Paris. In addition, many radio and television interviews of Schneider, as well as journalistic comments and TV documentaries about her are available on the internet (on video-sharing and audio-visual archives websites such as YouTube and Dailymotion, and the Ina[1] website), other audio-visual material was only available in archives such as some of her less-known films (*L'Amour à la mer*, Guy Gilles, 1964; *My Lover, My Son*, John Newland, 1970; *Tausend Lieder ohne Ton*, 1977, Claudia Holldack). I also examined a plethora of websites dedicated to Schneider and administrated by her fans, but bearing in mind their variable degree of reliability, they were rigorously cross-checked with primary sources when possible. I have also relied on established scholarship in several academic fields as well as more recent material on Schneider to which I now turn.

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Review of literature

The analysis of Schneider's trajectory is an historical project rooted within cultural studies, and the fields of research in which it engages are numerous. My methodology derives from theories and paradigms developed in Anglo-American film star studies from the 1970s onwards. Star studies now constitutes a significant academic discipline that presents many perspectives, and is constantly evolving; thus, to undertake a review of the field in its entirety is neither possible nor actually necessary. After a brief review of the main debates within star studies, I will focus on the most directly relevant areas for my analysis of Schneider: German and French star studies, European and transnational film stardom, and finally an account of the literature on Schneider herself, which, in view of the role of Alain Delon in Schneider's life and career, includes the emerging subfield of film star couples.

[1] Insritut national de l'audiovisuel.

1. The origins of star studies

Edgar Morin with his pioneer book *Les stars* (1957) was amongst the first scholars – alongside Roland Barthes and his *Mythologies* (1957) – to look at the phenomenon of stardom and stars as concepts. Adopting an anthropological perspective, Morin considers the star as an 'uber-personality' ('sur-personnalité') made of the permutation of the actor's personality with the personalities of his/her multiple roles. Morin compared stars to gods (the 'new Olympians'), but it is not until the 1970s and the influence of semiotics that Richard Dyer addressed the concept of the star as a sign, a constructed image in the signifying system that is film, as well as an intertextual, multi-media phenomenon.

On its first publication in 1979 Richard Dyer's *Stars* set new principles and methods of critical and theoretical rigour in the emergent field of star studies. Through the review of films, magazines, publicity and critical texts, Dyer construes the industrial, historical, ideological and aesthetic importance of screen icons. He shows how stars are constructed by institutions for financial gain and in order to target a specific audience with a personal signature that differentiates them from other stars. Audiences relate to stars because they admire and share traits with them. Dyer rejects vague notions such as aura, talent or 'star quality' (a concept later examined by Martin Shingler, 2012) and defines the film star as a constructed image, a 'structured polysemy' (Dyer, 1998, p. 63) elaborated from an actor's performances and the assemblage of diverse signs from different media texts (studios' promotional material, publicity, film roles, the commentary/criticism on those roles and reception by audiences and fans). Although his work is based on Hollywood, most of Dyer's case studies provide patterns for a detailed investigation of Romy Schneider's star image. He also addresses the question of performance, which I will examine in the following section.

Dyer thus shows how stars are complex systems made of formal and cultural elements from acting roles, performance style and public image, subsequently identified with the term 'persona'. Dyer's theoretical and methodological considerations are further developed and illustrated in *Heavenly bodies* (1986) where he studies three major stars – Marilyn Monroe, Paul Robeson and Judy Garland –, illustrating and developing each star's image against the backdrop of the attitudes and experiences of specific social groups (Monroe is considered in the context of ideas about sexuality in the 1950s for instance). Indeed, far from being only the reflection of a given society, the star makes explicit social and ideological contradictions and tensions that cannot be solved in real life, as much at it (symbolically) solves them. According to Dyer stars take part in the

construction of representations in the field of 'political identities' by offering models of class, sex and ethnicity. In his essay 'Four films of Lana Turner' (1991), he exposes the contradictory illusions in Turner's star image and challenges the question of how her private life passes through her screen roles and inversely.

2. The study of performance

Already in *Stars* (1979) Dyer stresses how a star possesses a particular performance style that 'through its familiarity will inform the performance s/he gives in any particular film' (1998, p. 142). Following Dyer's analytical methodology 'performance signs' (facial expression, voice, gestures, body posture and body movement, pp. 134-150) and the perspectives of the authors mentioned below, I am, for my study of Schneider, directly concerned with the semiotics and stylistics of film acting. That is the actor's repertory of gestures, postures, expression and speech that compose a 'field of discourse', an ensemble of signs established by a star over a number of films, that expresses meaning for audience and 'carries the meaning of her/his image just as much as the "inert" element of appearance, the particular sound of her/his voice or dress style' (p. 142). In *Star acting* (1977) Charles Affron dissects the acting style of three major Hollywood stars – Lillian Gish, Greta Garbo and Bette Davis –, and traces the evolution and the refinement of their respective techniques. The book offers a broad range of enlargements from film captures, which are helpful although the commentaries that go with them are often hyperbolic.

The development of a systematic methodology for analysing a star's performance was marked by the in-depth examination of film acting by James Naremore (1988). In the same perspective as Dyer, Naremore shows the ideological repercussions behind diverse approaches to acting, and suggests how the actor's on-screen behaviour can be related to the way we present ourselves in society. The author emphasises Dyer's concept that 'each [star] is also known for an idiolect, a set of performing traits that is highlighted in films' (Naremore, pp. 4, 64-65, 68-71). Furthermore, he demonstrates how mainstream cinema and its stylised presentations of character promote the illusion of 'natural' figures. This detailed study of acting offers an analysis of several stars in specific films and focuses on what actors concretely contribute in artistic (they can have influence over script-writing, character development, and casting, as Schneider did) and ideological ways to films.

The contributors to Alan Lovell and Peter Krämer's book *Screen acting* (1999) discuss the development of film acting from the silent era to the present common use of improvisation, through the Strasberg Method that fosters naturalism, while exploring

ideologies that have influenced film acting and analysing performance styles of many actors and filmmakers' techniques. The reference to theatre theory and the tradition of theatrical performance can be traced in most of the works on performance, such as in *Movie acting, the film reader* (2004) edited by Pamela Robertson Wojcik which includes essays by Andrew Higson, James Naremore and Siegfried Kracauer amongst others. Some texts provide detailed analyses of case studies, while others adopt a more theoretical approach. The book addresses a wide range of questions: from the very definition of film acting, its history, its references to theatre acting, its differences according to genres, to the issue of typecasting (which is important to my study of Schneider's career) and the question that keeps intriguing scholars – what is 'realistic' acting?

In *Reframing screen performance* (2008) Cynthia Baron and Sharon Marie Carnicke emphasise the significance of expressive and suggestive details of film actors with various case studies. The authors offer a systematic approach for an analysis of screen performances by addressing them in the same way film actors study scripts. By combining the socio-semiological work of the Prague Linguistic Circle with François Delsarte's taxonomies of poses and gestures (first extensively discussed by Naremore) and Rudolf Laban's system of movement, Baron and Carnicke suggest a way to describe and understand the effect of film actors' breathing, gestures, poses and facial expressions. Christine Cornea's book *Genre and performance: film and television* (2010) is dedicated to contemporary cinema and television and emphasises the importance of popular genres in framing audiences' appreciation of screen acting.

3. Star and celebrity studies and Hollywood cinema

Following Dyer's work and the soaring of celebrity culture, the development of the internet and the globalisation of media, a plethora of studies of stardom, emerging from Anglo-American scholars have greatly expanded and diversified the scope of star studies along various lines – although they have mainly been associated with Hollywood cinema. I will now briefly introduce these perspectives before zooming in on those most relevant to my examination of Romy Schneider.

Since the 1970s, film scholars following Dyer have taken into consideration the active role of stars in the production of meanings, pleasures, and identities for all kinds of audiences and address important questions about the representations, the possibilities and cultural limitations of stars. With perspectives established from film history, sociology, textual analysis, psychoanalysis and cultural politics, they analyse the film

industry and the economic foundation of the star system (Barry King, 1985; Danae Clark,1995; Jeremy Butler, 1998; Richard DeCordova, 1999, Paul McDonald, 2000; Thomas Austin and Martin Barker, 2003), while there has been a rise in studies of individual stars. Amongst these, the work of Andrew Britton (in 1984 and 1995) on Katharine Hepburn was a landmark, but there have been many other important studies, such as those of Cary Grant, Doris Day, Marilyn Monroe, Bette Davies, and many more Hollywood stars, such as the more recent work by Pam Cook on Nicole Kidman in 2012 and Cynthia Baron on Denzel Washington in 2015.

A second major development in star studies occurred when feminist and gender perspectives were applied to concepts of star and stardom, which made scholars profoundly question their corpus of films. This has involved revealing both mechanisms of domination that socially structure gender differences, and misconceptions about masculinity and femininity that aim at concealing that domination. Laura Mulvey's foundational essay 'Visual pleasure and narrative cinema' (written in 1973, published in 1975), despite subsequent criticism, including from the author herself, is still considered as a manifesto for feminist and gender studies of the cinema. She argues that the narrative and filmic codes of Hollywood cinema make the male character (and actor) the centre of narrative, point of view and action, while female characters, most of the time passive, are presented as (beautiful) bodies and objects usually seen from a male perspective. Considering the importance of stars and films as supports of identification for male and female audiences and representations of sexual 'norms', one can see the critical importance of adopting a gender perspective when studying stars. I intend to study Schneider in terms of her construction of gender (as well as from a feminist point of view), in the context of the traditional German society of the 1950s and of the rise of women's rights and radical cultural changes in the 1960s and 1970s, as well as notions of female beauty, their historical and cultural anchorage and ideological ambiguities. This is helpful in understanding the appeal of Schneider's image as a woman, as well as the media construction of her as an emanation of the 'eternal feminine'.

Since Mulvey's pivotal text, scholars – first from the UK and the US[2] – have developed numerous gender analyses of many types of corpus (films by an individual

[2] For the French context I have to mention Françoise Audé's non-academic books *Ciné-modèles, cinéma d'elles: situations de femmes dans le cinéma français, 1956-1979* (1981) followed by *Cinéma d'elles*, *1981-2001: situation des cinéastes femmes dans le cinéma français* (2002), and the groundbreaking work of

filmmaker, with an individual star, films from a particular era, of a particular genre, or for a particular audience) and adopted various approaches (psychoanalysis, semiotics, aesthetics, ethnography, sociology and cultural history: Studlar, 1996; Kaplan, 1998; Hansen, 2000; Rollet and Tarr, 2001; Roof, 2002 to name a few).

A third development in star studies saw a turn in conducting empirical research on audiences (historical and contemporary). Particularly important are the studies by Judith Mayne (1993) and Jackie Stacey (1994; followed by Rachel Moseley, 2002; Martin Barker, 1998, 2001 and 2007) These scholars call our attention to the fact that the gap between 'film subjects' and 'spectators' is paramount to the study of spectatorship and that, regarding the study of stars, 'inconsistency, change and fluctuation are characteristic of star images' (Mayne, p. 128). As my study of Schneider will show, this inconsistency is one of the many reasons why audiences are drawn to stars who embody the universal and appealing idea of reinvention, the union of contraries and oppositions (Mayne, p. 138).

Subsequent scholars added an emphasis on the importance of style to the construction of a star persona by considering the significance of the relations between fashion, dress and star images (Stella Bruzzi, 1997; Rachel Moseley, 2005; Pamela Church-Gibson and Stella Bruzzi, 2000 and 2013). From semiotic, social and cultural understandings of film costume, those works address the ways in which costumes articulate identities (gender, national, class, ethnic, sexual), as well as the 'performance' or 'spectacle' of the star in costume, concepts that are pertinent to Schneider, given the importance of costume films to her career and image. More recently star studies have branched out into works on longevity, star couples, and the concept of the star film (narratives that feature stardom and the star system). In another major departure, scholars have turned to the examination of celebrity culture, both stars outside film and stars whose fame crosses over to other media (Chris Rojek, 2001; David Marshall, 2006; Sue Holmes and Sean Redmond, 2006 and 2007). Although Schneider's career stopped in 1982, thus before Europe adapted to the globalised celebrity culture, some scholars within celebrity studies (Christine Geraghty, 2000; Diane Negra, 2001; Sue Holmes, 2005) have put the accent on the importance of the exposure of stars' private lives, especially for female stars, which is particularly relevant to my thesis.

Geneviève Sellier in 2005: *La Nouvelle Vague, un cinéma au masculin singulier* (translated in 2008 by Kristin Ross: *Masculine singular: French New Wave cinema*).

As we see the scope of star studies is vast, always growing and diversifying, but the broad development of star and celebrity studies discussed in the above sections concerns primarily Hollywood cinema. There is now, however, an important and growing field of studies of star systems outside Hollywood (Indian stardom, Chinese stardom and so on; e.g. Neepa Majumdar, 2009; Mary Farquhar and Yingijn Zhang, 2010) but I will concentrate, below on studies of European star systems, starting with German and French cinema, as they most directly concern Romy Schneider's case, then moving on to publications about the star herself.

4. Stardom in German cinema

German star studies for a long time tended to concentrate on the most frequently studied periods of German cinema such as Expressionism, the Nazi era, and the New German Cinema. Schneider rose to stardom in Austrian and German popular cinema during the mid-1950s, a transitional period for Germanic[3] cinema (see Part I) that is still seldom considered by film scholars. There are significant exceptions though, starting with the case study of German director and star Reinhold Schünzel by Thomas Elsaesser in *Popular European cinema* (co-edited in 1992 by Richard Dyer and Ginette Vincendeau), as well as an entire section on stars in the seminal collection *The German cinema book* (co-edited by Tim Bergfelder, Erica Carter and Deniz Göktürk, 2002).

The first major work to focus solely on German film stars is *Der Filmstar* by Helmut Korte and Stephen Lowry (2000) who, amongst other stars, dedicated a section to Schneider who also appears on the cover of the book. Although the authors tried to avoid the duplication of journalistic discources, the chapter on Schneider reiterates a number of mythemes[4] that defined her persona without subjecting them to a critical reading – such a gender reading for instance. The chapter offers a useful first approach to Schneider's career and persona though, even if it does not sufficiently unpack the paradoxical elements of her identity.

[3] I will sometimes use the term 'Germanic' (as in Germanic cultures) to cover both West German and Austrian cinemas as Schneider moved from one to the other during the 1950s, although those are distinct film industries (I talk about this distinction in more details in Part I, chapter 1).

[4] The term 'mytheme' was coined by Claude Lévi-Strauss in his 1955 essay 'La structure des mythes', edited in his book *Anthropologie structurale* (1958, pp. 227–255).

Antje Ascheid's 2003 study *Hitler's heroines: stardom and womanhood in Nazi cinema* analyses the contradictory images of womanhood that surfaced in the films made during that critical time. She shows how 'Nazi heroines' (embodied by stars Kristina Soderbaum, Lilian Harvey, and Zarah Leander) negotiated the gender conflicts facing contemporary women – the Nazis' attempt to contain the 'woman question', to redirect female subjectivity and desires towards self-sacrifice for the greatness of the Germanic nation. In German, Friedemann Beyer's 2012 book *Frauen für Deutschland: Filmidole des Drittes Reichs* looks at five stars of the Third Reich, each embodying a specific type of femininity.

The great star of German cinema, and the most famous worldwide, is Marlene Dietrich who has been the subject of several studies. However, *Dietrich's Ghosts* (2004) by Erica Carter is the first significant English-language study to look at the Third Reich star system. Carter argues that, after the Weimar period, the German star system was reorganised to foster an anti-modernist mode of spectatorship oriented to an appreciation of the beautiful and the sublime. She also discusses the reconfiguring of film production and exhibition around idealist aesthetic precepts and offers case studies of three stars – Emil Jannings who exemplifies what Carter calls the 'volkisch sublime', Marlene Dietrich who appears as a figure at the crossroads of modernist and idealist conceptions of beauty, and Zarah Leander who in the films of the early war years represents a post-Dietrich emblem of the presumed sublimity of fascist war. This compelling study reconsiders paradigms in German film history by suggesting other lines of interpretation of the icons and popular culture of the Third Reich.

Subsequently, scholars turned to other German film stars. Tim Bergfelder (2007) analysed the persona of Peter van Eyck from a gender perspective in order to situate the reconstruction of a national identity during the 1950s. Joseph Garncarz (2010) examined the film star system during the Weimar period, and Sarah Thomas's book (2012) on Peter Lorre is illuminating with regards to the issue of typecasting in relation to Germanic screen identities. She questions the dominant, and in her opinion reductive, views of Lorre's career, pointing to his versatility. Her study also has the merit of examining a film star who moved from German to Hollywood cinema. Relevant to Schneider in a different way is Ulrike Sieglohr's in-depth study of Hanna Schygulla (2014). The actress is one of the most celebrated figures of the New German Cinema and a contemporary of Schneider who, albeit through different avenues (as her work was mostly confined to auteur cinema), exemplified transnational stardom as well. Sieglohr's work is also another useful

guide for my study, as she examines the versatility of Schygulla's idiosyncratic acting style and discusses the international reception of her films.

The study of East German film stardom is growing as well, although it is for now mostly an assemblage of individual articles and stand-alone chapters in scholarly books on the broader topic of East German cinema – such as Stefan Soldovieri's and Sabine Hake's overviews of stardom in GDR in *Light Motives: German popular film in perspective* (Halle and McCarthy, 2003) for the former and in *DEFA at the crossroads of East German and international film culture* (Silberman and Wrage, 2014) for the latter. Seán Allan's chapter in his co-edited book with Sebastian Heiduschke (2016) also looks at the question of transnational stardom in the German context through the intriguing case of American actor and director Dean Reed, one of the most popular artists in East Germany in the 1970s. Recently, Victoria I. Rizo Lenshyn wrote a chapter on German actress Jutta Hoffmann as a 'socialist star' in Frackman and Stewart's *Gender and sexuality in East German film: intimacy and alienation* (2018).

Particularly relevant to Schneider, although outside star studies strictly speaking, are the works on the 'Sissi phenomenon'. The consensus (Mary Wauchope, 2002; Claudia Breger, 2004) is that the *Sissi* films were symptomatic of regressive politics related to the 1950s Heimat films; these presented a pastoral Germanic homeland as an antidote to oppressive national history, a post-war return to political and national harmony celebrating the pre-Nazi German and Austrian homelands. In that regard the chapter by Erica Carter in *Screening war: perspectives on German suffering* (Paul Cooke and Marc Silberman, 2010), and the essay published in *Screen* by Heidi Schlipphacke entitled 'Melancholy Empress: queering empire in Ernst Marischka's *Sissi* films' (2010) are particularly enlightening. Carter examines the *Sissi* trilogy through the perspective of spectatorship and reception and sees a relation between the melodramatic aesthetic of the films and a victim sensibility that circulated in their reception in West Germany around the 'shock of a dual spatial loss': that of a 'common Germanic, film-aesthetic space' and the 'political loss of Easter Europe as imperial territory' (p. 82).

Heidi Schlipphacke also suggests that, instead of a fantasy offered to the traumatised West German and Austrian spectators, the *Sissi* films dramatised a 'crisis of homelessness' (p. 246) by reflecting deep-seated distress about 'fixed locations, stable notions of home', and 'historical continuity that haunt[s] post-Nazi Germany and Austria' (p. 233). After the fateful union between Germany and Austria during the war, the *Sissi* films, it is argued, 'reflect the potentially destructive nature of romanticised unions rather

than restage an idealised fusion of the former Nazi nations' (p. 248). The focus of Schlipphacke's article is not particularly related to my subject as she offers a queer reading of the narrative and stylistic choices of the *Sissi* films that, she says, formed a 'complex cinematic text' and provoked elaborate 'modes of affect' from various types of audiences (p. 233). Nevertheless, this perspective brings to light the cross-cultural appeal of the *Sissi* trilogy, to which Schneider's presence was crucial. Schlipphacke's text forms a chapter in her collective book (with Maura E. Hametz, 2018) that gives an impressively detailed account of the global reception of the Sissi figure and the construction of the myth and memory of Empress Elisabeth of Austria. The still growing literature on the *Sissi* films will be mentioned in greater details in the relevant chapter, yet it should be noted now that the impact and influence of Schneider *as a star* on the iconic character and its development has been very little explored. One of the aims of my thesis is to resituate the star and her impact at the centre of the *Sissi* cycle's success.

As well as stardom in German cinema, work on French film stars is equally relevant to my study of Schneider.

5. Stardom in French cinema

Despite the fact that the first academic publication on stars was by French sociologist Edgar Morin (see above), it took a long time before star studies reached French academia. Their enlargement to analytical works on French stars first came from British film studies, especially with the analysis of Jean Gabin by Ginette Vincendeau (in a 1993 book with Claude Gauteur). Vincendeau was the first scholar to study a star as the expression of French society's contradictions at a given time. *Jean Gabin, anatomie d'un mythe* combines Anglo-American cultural studies with gender studies and breaks with the formalist and aesthetic approach that was predominant in studies of French cinema. Vincendeau demonstrates the 'mythical' operation in Gabin's films as a masculine screen identity, also bringing out the actor's role in the perception and the construction of (French) national identity. The ambivalence of the construction of gender norms in film (that Modleski analysed in Hitchcock's films in 1988) is here articulated with the historical context of production and reception.

Vincendeau's long-standing interest in French stars subsequently found its way in many articles and book chapters. She wrote essays on Brigitte Bardot in 1992 (b), on Catherine Deneuve and Gérard Depardieu in 1993 (a, b), on Jeanne Moreau in 1998, and on Juliette Binoche in 1993 (c) and 2000 (a). Those works show the ideological, cultural

and economic importance of French stars by exploring their acting styles and characters, the ways in which they embody specific types at specific times, and the meaning of their personas regarding socio-cultural contexts. This wide range of essays was the foundation of Vincendeau's book *Stars and stardom in French cinema* (2000b) where the French star system *per se* was studied for the first time. Her work is still the reference in the field of French star studies and provides fruitful examples and methodologies. Vincendeau's analysis of Bardot and Deneuve will serve as points of comparison for my study of Schneider' trajectory and star image, as well as the (additional) chapter on Annie Girardot in the French edition of the book (2008), another immensely popular star of the 1970s and, like Schneider, largely unknown to Anglo-American audiences. Those comparisons to Schneider and the analysis of Schneider herself will also help in my attempt to draw more broadly the landscape of female popularity and gender identity construction through screen roles. Guy Austin also studies French cinema from a UK perspective and with *Stars in modern French films* (2003) he offers another study of major French stars that overlaps somehow with Vincendeau's work, but also analyses Sylvia Kristel and the *Emmanuelle* phenomenon (Just Jaeckin, 1974), and, in his chapter 'Foreign bodies', examines Isabelle Adjani and Jean Seberg in terms of post-colonial (white) racial identity.

Following those groundbreaking works, other scholars from Britain have dedicated studies to French cinema and its stars, whether through overall analysis or specific cases. Studies of stars of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s who were contemporaries of Schneider (Bardot, Martine Carol, Deneuve, Micheline Presle, Seberg), have proved useful to me as they provide different perspectives and comparison points – Alastair Phillips wrote on Carol (1998), Carrie Tarr on Presle (2000), Fiona Handyside (2002) on Seberg, Melissa Anderson on Françoise Dorléac (2002), Sarah Leahy on Bardot (2002) and Simone Signoret (2014), Susan Hayward on Signoret (2004), Vicki Callahan (2005) on silent cinema star Musidora, Lisa Downing and Sue Harris (2007) on Deneuve, Phil Powrie and Éric Rebillard (2009) on 1920s star Pierre Batcheff, Vincendeau (2013, 2015b) on Bardot, and Harris on Gérard Depardieu (2015). Nick Rees-Roberts and Darren Waldron co-edited a book (2015) on Alain Delon in which Gwénaëlle Le Gras's chapter on the star's youthful seductive looks during his years spent with Schneider is proving most useful to my study.

Martine Carol's femininity and appeal to a broad audience through the genre of the costume film echo aspects of Schneider's star image, even though Carol's characters were older compared to Schneider's early costume films. Phillips's core argument that

Carol's performance raises questions about gendered spectatorship, and place her within wider contemporary discourses of femininity in post-war France, mirrors my own perspective on Schneider. There is also a parallel to draw between Micheline Presle's post-war trajectory and Schneider's 'post-Sissi' status – beside the fact that both were cast in *Christine* (Pierre-Gaspard Huit, 1958). As Genevieve Sellier argues (2002), Presle's glamorous and sophisticated image was not sufficient to make her a Hollywood star, but it was also not flexible enough to fit the changing zeitgeist upon her return in France. Similarly, Schneider's wholesome princess image was not enough to secure a successful Hollywood career and proved problematic in the Germanic context when she resisted being typecast as the 'perfect' young woman to meet national expectations (as was also the case for Hildegard Knef).

Some stars' personas are disruptive and illustrate how they contribute to the renegotiation of types (see Dyer, 1979). They offer other choices of feminine identities to filmgoers by expanding the limits of what has been culturally presented and it will be relevant to analyse Schneider's image through that perspective. Susan Hayward (2004) emphasises the fact that Signoret asserted herself as the 'subject' in her films – and in her public life –, and not as a fetishized object, so in many ways she was the opposite of Schneider who, as I will explore, seemed unable to escape conventional modes of first 'innocent' and then erotic female representation. Vincendeau's book on Bardot (2013) also explores the star's complex and groundbreaking image of femininity through her film career and her enduring celebrity status. She continues her examination of the French star with her essay 'A star is torn (to pieces)' (2015b) in which she adopts a different methodology by analysing Bardot's reception by 'ordinary' spectators expressed in *Cinémonde* readers' letters in the late 1950s. Comparing Bardot and Schneider is an important thread that I will follow throughout my study also in terms of reception, as the two stars were frequently and at different moments of their careers considered counter-examples of one another.

The context in which Schneider arrived in France in the late 1950s is analysed in *Stardom in post-war France* (John Gaffney and Diana Holmes, 2007), in which scholars discuss the 1950s-1960s as a period of change, torn between modernity and tradition, through stars as they 'capture their era […] in a range of ways' (p. 1) and can be seen as key sites for the historical analysis of national identity. The stars and celebrities analysed in this book range from the cinema to music, literature and intellectual culture, politics and sports. They embodied contemporary desires, tensions, dynamics, doubts and fears

in France after World War II. One of Gaffney and Holmes's intriguing conclusions is that the post-May 68 era did not manage to produce either such a cultural shift or such a gathering of stars – a point that I vehemently contest and challenge throughout my study by calling forward the careers and images of, not only Schneider, but also other extremely popular 1970s stars such as Girardot, Deneuve, Michel Piccoli, Yves Montand, and Philippe Noiret.

Whereas, as we have seen, studies of French stardom have flourished in Anglo-American film studies, inspired by cultural studies, gender studies and star studies, circumstances are different in France. In a context more influenced by auteurism and aesthetic approaches, film studies with a socio-cultural focus (and thus star studies) initially met with resistance in France, and only gradually emerged from the mid-1990s.

In this regard, Noël Burch and Geneviève Sellier's *La drôle de guerre des sexes du cinéma français*: *1930-1956* (1996[5]) represents a cornerstone in film studies in France. The authors break with traditional analysis and take a fresh look at film production in the French classical period by using textual and contextual analysis from a gender perspective, thereby starting gender studies *à la française*. Drawing from Anglo-American gender studies, brought into French translation by Bérénice Reynaud and Ginette Vincendeau (1993) and also Burch himself (2007), Burch and Sellier's perspective is that of the history of representations and particularly the staging of gender relations. Studying emblematic films and personalities from the 1930s to the 1950s, Burch and Sellier demonstrate how gender identities were constructed in French films of the period under study, and although stars are not their primary subject, their work encompasses many of them.

Until recently a traditional auteurist approach determined the majority of French film studies, but with scholars such as Vincendeau, Burch, Sellier, Raphaëlle Moine and Gwénaëlle Le Gras the shift towards a cultural and historical perspective on star studies, and more broadly French cinema, is tangible.[6] While Gauteur and Vincendeau's book on Jean Gabin was first published in 1993 (and reprinted in 2006), since the mid-2000s and

[5] The English translation (by Peter Graham) was published in 2014: *The Battle of the sexes in French cinema, 1930-1956*.

[6] Also, the dialogue between Anglo-American and French film scholars is quite vivid – Geneviève Sellier heads a series at L'Harmattan Publishing named 'Champs visuels – Étrangers' for which some of the books previously mentioned here have been translated into French, such as Dyer's *Stars*, Vincendeau's *Stars and stardom in French cinema*, and Hayward's *Simone Signoret: the star as cultural sign*.

the work of Gwénaëlle Le Gras as well as Delphine Chedaleux, star studies have developed in the French context. Le Gras's book on Catherine Deneuve, published in 2010, was followed by a book on Michel Simon in 2010 (a), and many chapters and articles on Bourvil, Delon, Girardot and Edwige Feuillère amongst others. Particularly important to my thesis are Le Gras's 2005 and 2007 essays on Deneuve's star image in the 1970s, a time when the dominant aesthetic of French cinema changed from glamour to naturalism. Oddly, it is at this moment that a sophisticated Schneider became very popular in French Cinema. This mismatch is an important question for me to consider in my thesis. Another mismatch regarding Schneider and the French cinema context is generic. Le Gras's co-edited book with Chedaleux, *Genres et acteurs du cinéma français 1930-1960* (2012) considers the impact of French film genres on stardom. The authors point out the ability of French performers to go from one genre to another, especially from comedy to drama, and they argue that this means stars help bridge a gap from genre to auteur cinema. By contrast, Schneider seems to have been confined to a particular genre within each national context: after her work in costume film in German and Austrian films, in France she was almost entirely cast in drama.

Following the emergence and expansion of star studies, the revival of reception and audience studies is currently booming in France (Jullier and Leveratto, 2010; Le Gras and Chedaleux, 2012) – as was the case earlier in Anglo-American film studies. This research – which shifts from a semiotic angle to an empirical one – proves that audiences are highly active when it comes to their relationship with film, including through stars and the emotional attachment they show to them. In that perspective Geneviève Sellier launched a research programme called Cinepop50 'Cinémas et cinéphilies populaires dans la France d'après-guerre 1945-1958' that took place from 2012 to 2014 and was conducted by about 15 scholars. The programme, amongst other things, studied the reception of popular stars. This area of film history, difficult to access and rarely examined, casts a light on the words and opinions of 'ordinary' viewers. This fresh perspective on stars has given rise to several essays (Camille Beaujault, 2014; Myriam Juan, 2014), as well as special issues of journals such as the first 2015 issue of *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies*, dedicated to stars of the 1940s and the 1950s French cinema. All the contributors to the issue (Moine, Sellier, Le Gras, Vincendeau, Eliane DalMolin, Roger Célestin, Pierre-Olivier Toulza, Thomas Pillard, Jennifer de Castro) confirm the relevance of taking popular entertainment and its uses seriously as a means to approaching and understanding the prevailing ideology of a

society at a given time. Also emerging from the project is Raphaëlle Moine and Sébastien Layerle's issue of *Théorème*, 'Voyez comme on chante! Films musicaux et cinéphilie populaires en France (1945-1958)' (2014), which examines popular yet previously under-studied stars such as Luis Mariano.

As is clear from this survey, star studies in French scholarship continue expanding and diversifying along similar lines to the work conducted in Anglophone studies. Recently, Charles-Antoine Courcoux, Gwénaëlle Le Gras and Raphaëlle Moine co-edited *L'Âge des stars: des images à l'épreuve du vieillissement* (2017) a collaborative book at the intersection of star studies and age studies with detailed analyses of French, US, and British case studies. Gwénaëlle Le Gras contributed a chapter on the French star system in *A Companion to contemporary French cinema* and Vincendeau to the rise of 'ethnic' stardom in France (Fox, Marie, Moine, and Radner, 2015), and scholars such as Jamil Dakhlia have turned to celebrity studies. Yet, despite the increasing range of stars covered by Anglo-American and French star studies surveyed above, Schneider has been left unexamined, which is especially surprising in the French context in view of her continued popularity there. While it will be enriched by the comparison to actors of the post-war era (Bardot, Signoret, Moreau) and of the post-May 68 generation (Deneuve, Girardot, Marlène Jobert, Miou-Miou, Adjani[7]), my thesis thus aims to fill an important gap in building up a more complete and accurate study of stardom in French cinema. Finally, I wish to place Schneider's stardom beyond the strictly national and examine her as a transnational (and trans-European) star, reflecting both the middle part of her career and another important area of star studies.

6. From trans-European to transnational stardom

Romy Schneider's career is trans-European: from Germany and Austria she moved to France, via Italy and the UK. The research on stars from a transnational perspective is an important, more recent, part of stardom studies and it focuses on performers whose star status travelled from the cinemas of their home country to other national cinemas and the evolution they experienced as a result. In this section I will look in turn at European stardom, then the exchanges between Europe and Hollywood, and finally transnational stardom.

[7] The thesis of Alexandre Moussa on Delphine Seyrig (in French) is forthcoming in 2020.

European stardom has been examined in a number of books, such as *The continental actress: European film stars of the postwar era* (Martin and Segrave, 1990). However, in her edited collection *Heroines without heroes* Ulrike Sieglohr (2000) and other authors explore in a more scholarly fashion a little-considered period of European film history (1945-1951) from the point of view of gender representations during a period of intense national identity struggles. The book presents case studies of emblematic stars and the political and social conditions that contributed to their popularity – including Micheline Presle and Simone Signoret for France, and Hildegard Knef for Germany. The chapter on Knef, written by Sieglohr, examines how the actress became an icon of West German post-war reconstruction in the mid-to-late-1940s and reveals how much certain aspects of a star's career and image are favoured while other are (temporarily) ignored.

The core of *Stellar encounters* edited by Tytti Soila (2009) is the relations between stars and nationhood, the ways in which stars embody national characteristics and represent specific moments within a nation's history. The book draws together a diverse selection of essays on European film stars, including those from Greece and Scandinavia, in a bid to redress the Anglo-American bias and challenge the notion of Hollywood as the originator of the star system. *Stellar encounters* also revolves around the concept of 'vernacular stardom', an expression first introduced by Vinzenz Heidiger and Alexandra Schneider (Soila, 2009), building upon the work of Miriam Hansen (2000) who expanded the notion of modernism to include the popular. In their 2015 co-edited book *The Europeanness of European cinema*, Mary Harrod, Mariana Liz and Alissa Timoshkina examine diverse aspects of trans-European cinema, including stardom; Vincendeau explores Juliette Binoche's career and image in terms of her representing 'the perfect European star' while Olof Hedling questions the very possibility of a European stardom.

While a running theme in the works above addresses the difficulties of trans-European stardom, of stars succeeding outside their national borders, an older field of studies since the 1970s has been preoccupied by the relationship between Europe and Hollywood. Romy Schneider worked briefly in Hollywood; but, like many European actors before and after her who tried to make a career there, her interlude in Hollywood can be retrospectively seen as a 'failure' (see Part II, chapter 2) to be set against the minority of high-profile successful cases.

In *The Hollywood exiles* (1976), John Baxter considers the influx of foreign artists, actors and filmmakers, mainly from Europe, from the 1920s to the 1940s. They

migrated from Germany[8], Hungary, Austria, Great Britain, and France (especially during Wold War II) to Hollywood for industrial, political, financial or personal reasons. For each individual actor, the author looks at how they were recruited/discovered, how they integrated into the Hollywood system, and how they felt about their departure from Europe and their welcome in the US. In the same vein, Dominique Lebrun also looked at the exchanges between Europe and Hollywood, first between France and America in *Paris-Hollywood* (1987) and then other European nationals' careers (close to a thousand) in *Trans Europe Hollywood* (1992). Although these books present detailed accounts of each artist, they resemble more catalogues than analyses. More critical and theoretical studies of Franco-American film relations can be found in *France-Hollywood: échanges cinématographiques et identités nationales* edited by Martin Barnier and Raphaëlle Moine (2002), which examines different types of movements back and forth across the Atlantic. The authors analyse the ideological, political and cultural effects of these exchanges on the perception of national identities. The case studies discussed show an exacerbation of tensions regarding identity as well as an interplay of influences between the two film industries. Widening the remit to the whole of Europe, but focussing exclusively on actors, *Journeys of desire* (2006) edited by Ginette Vincendeau and Alastair Phillips offers a comprehensive and analytical guide through the trajectories of European actors in US cinema (previously touched upon sporadically in Andrew Higson and Richard Maltby's 1990 co-edited book *'Film Europe' and 'Film America': Cinema, commerce and cultural exchange 1920-1939*). Particularly resonant with my examination of Schneider during her short-lived Hollywood stay is *Journeys of desire*'s consideration of the cultural aspect carried along with European performers, the cultural types, clichés and national stereotypes that Hollywood saw in them as well as the identities carried by the stars.

A few scholarly works also address how non-American stars contribute to the construction of ethnic and racial identity in Hollywood cinema. Diane Negra's *Off-white Hollywood* (2001) investigates the ways in which the ethnicity of white European-American actresses played a key role in the mythical construction of the US identity and nation, and brought to the surface the racial and ethnic assumptions that subtend the fascination for on-screen glamour and sex appeal. The author focuses on key stars of the

[8] For an insightful study of the work and contribution of German emigrants to the US since the 1930s (and beyond the scope of cinema) see Anthony Heilbut (1983), *Exiled in paradise.*

silent, classical and contemporary eras to demonstrate how each actress illustrates aspects of ethnicity, gender, consumerism and class at work in US culture. The chapter on Norwegian star Sonja Henie contains echoes of Schneider's Hollywood career by exploring the ways in which Henie, while presented as a white European woman in Hollywood, is associated with 'exoticism'. Tim Bergfelder (2004) develops the concept of 'exoticism' in his case study analysis of Anna May Wong, the first Hong-Kong Chinese-American star of Hollywood cinema who made several journeys back and forth between America and Europe, as does Sarah Berry in Lucy Fisher and Marcia Landy's co-edited book *Stars: the film reader* (2004). And Ora Gelley (2011) continues analysing the relationship between European post-war films and US cinema through the case of Hollywood star Ingrid Bergman and Italian director Roberto Rossellini.

Addressing the question of transnational stardom *per se*, beyond the European-born workforce in Hollywood, Elisabeth Bronfen's essay on Marlene Dietrich (2003) is exemplary. Dietrich is one of the most famous artists who left Europe for Hollywood, but instead of looking at her in terms of fleeing Nazi Germany, Bronfen analyses the actress's transnational star status in *Der Blaue Engel* (Josef von Sternberg, 1930) before her relocation, arguing that the film marks Dietrich's immutable passage beyond substantial geopolitical borders, leading her to attain global star status.

More recently *Transnational stardom: international celebrity in film and popular culture* edited by Russell Meeuf and Raphael Raphael (2013) explores how the mobility and the 'plasticity' of stars may help various individuals to cope with the changing and unpredictable ideas, beliefs and principles of our transnational world. The third part of the book ('Gender and mobile "European" identities: '60s and '70s francophone stars') is about Alain Delon and Geneviève Bujold, and the chapter written on Delon by Mark Gallagher is of particular interest to my study. The performances and public persona of the actor are observed in relation to the process involved in star making, from local to national and international scenes of recognition (from a different perspective, Vincendeau (2014) discusses Delon's largely unsuccessful attempt at a Hollywood career in the 1960s).

From transnational to world cinema, scholarship has widened its remit when it comes to stars. Sabrina Yu's examination of Chinese film star Jet Li leads to a thorough study of Chinese masculinity and global stardom across cinematic cultures (2012). Andrea Bandauer's co-edited book with Michelle Royer *Stars in world cinema: film icons and star systems across cultures* (2015) includes a chapter on Schneider that I examine

below, while Paul Cook, Stephanie Dennison, Alex Marlow-Mann and Rob Stone's collection *The Routledge companion to world cinema* (2017) also contains work on stars and the difficulties of their travelling through borders.

7. Literature on Romy Schneider

Up to this point I have reviewed studies of German, French, European, transnational and world film stars that are relevant to my research. It is now time to come to Romy Schneider herself. Curiously, as already mentioned, there have been very few scholarly studies of Schneider. Yet there has been a plethora of material related to her. However, as is common to other major popular stars, large amounts of writing on Schneider consist of biographical and autobiographical material of different value. Those works often lack originality, reliability or analytical perspective and their sources are rarely cited. Nevertheless, they contribute to the promotion and the construction of the star's image. Therefore, these works on Schneider are useful as raw material, for they are symptomatic of discourses on the star; I can also glean some useful information from them.

There is a so-called 'autobiography' by Renate Seydel, *Ich, Romy: Tagebuch eines Lebens* (1988), that has been published several times and translated into French (1989). The book is a compilation of Schneider's own diary of her early life and of second-hand writing; therefore, it is not exactly the 'diary' that the title suggests. It assembles excerpts from a series of articles published by Schneider's mother Magda Schneider in the *München Illustrierte* in early 1957, excerpts from articles published in magazines such as *Abendzeitung* (1958) and *Quick* (1965), and fragments from interviews given by Schneider to the German and French magazines *Stern* and *Paris Match* in 1981 and 1982. Seydel writes that all other comments by Schneider come from publications between 1957 and 1982 and are reproduced with the intention to present a coherent autobiography, but she does not provide specific references. While it is a fascinating document, *Ich, Romy* has to be considered with caution regarding the accuracy of timeline, events, and the comments on them. As far as possible I double-checked this source with others, such as reviews, and radio and television interviews although these too are not necessarily reliable as there are particular biases attached to specific contexts (for example, in the 1970s, the New German Cinema practitioners' dislike of popular post-war German cinema cemented Schneider's own rejection of the *Sissi*s). I try to be alert to exaggerations, contradictions and changes present in those discourses.

Another point of interest in those types of 'memoirs' is the stars' perception of their own image. Several protagonists in Schneider's entourage – friends, parents, celebrity colleagues, the star herself – keep repeating the same anecdotes and stories, using sometimes the exact same words, yet years apart (in that regard the 1983 biography of Schneider by fellow actress Hildegard Knef who alleged she had known and understood Schneider intimately is both fascinating in its details yet patronising in its tone). The stars' own discourses, however truthful they may aim to be, are inevitably distorted by what they read, saw, and have been told about themselves by journalists or agents. As a result, it is not unusual for the stars and those close to them to spread clichés about their life and career. Schneider is no exception to this process and this is the case too for Delon for instance who wrote the preface to *Delon-Romy, ils se sont tant aimés* (Barbier, Dureau, and Pommier, 2009) and to the second edition (2017) of David Lelait-Helo's *Romy*.

Much writing on Schneider is composed of annotated collections of photographs (Renate Seydel, 1987; Hanna Schygulla, 1988; Will McBride, 2002), biographies, and novels (Evelyne Bloch-Dano, 2007; Olaf Kraemer, 2008) – there are even 'astro-biographies' that purport to relate Schneider's life and character through the zodiac at the moment of her birth. Most of the works presented as biographies (Catherine Hermary-Vieille, 1986; Emmanuel Bonini, 2001; Sophie Guillou, 2006) contain romanticised elements and it is sometimes difficult for the reader to separate fact from fiction. As well as repeating previous accounts, those works draw heavily on the lexical fields of 'passion', 'myth', 'destiny', 'tragedy', and 'death' – as is perceptible in their titles (*La double mort de Romy* by Bernard Pascuito in 2002, *Des lilacs blancs en enfer*, by Christian Dureau in 2010). They are written in a colloquial or hyperbolic style, and they all rely on and relay the same 'mythemes', the basic elements that once reassembled build the Schneider myth. One extreme example is Marco Innocenti's 2009 Italian book about 23 famous 'tragic' women (including Schneider, Marilyn Monroe, Françoise Sagan, Vivien Leigh, Virginia Woolf, Jean Seberg, Janis Joplin and Sylvia Plath) entitled *La malattia chiamata Donna. Erano belle, famose e depresse* (*The disease called Woman. They were beautiful, famous and depressed*). Nonetheless, this massive amount of international writing on Schneider and its popularity – most of the books were published more than once, and have been translated into several languages – are useful symptoms of the actress's wide impact on audiences and of her continuing media presence.

The best-documented biographies of Schneider, and ones that adopt some critical and analytical perspective, are by Michael Jürgs (1991) and Günter Krenn (2008) – only available in German. They develop their discussion in a more scientific manner and in a more refined language. Krenn also wrote *Romy & Alain. Eine Amour fou* (2013), a detailed account of the personal and professional relationship between Schneider and Delon. The pairing with Delon is indeed an important component of the actress's career and star image. The perception of their couple intertwines various elements drawn from their respective personas and has to be considered in light of the emerging interest in star couples, the majority of them dedicated to Hollywood cinema. Notable is Virginia Wright Wexman's *Creating the couple: love, marriage, and Hollywood performance* (1993), an observation of film stars and performance styles and techniques that exposes the ideological effects of the star system on Hollywood's representations of being a couple, sexuality and marriage. Useful as background and in the context of art and literature, Isabelle de Courtivron and Whitney Chadwick's *Significant others* (1996) gathers a series of essays that focus on literary couples and on their mutual influence, and examine the issue of gender and creativity. With her book *Screen couple chemistry* (2002), Martha P. Nochimson enlarges the discussion of this important, yet hard to define dimension of popular cinema: the transcendent screen couple and its powerful 'chemistry'. There have been many books on the Schneider-Delon romance, but they are mostly annotated photographic albums that lack an analytical approach, but from which I can draw significant conclusions, especially from their focus on the 'mythical couple' (Tessier, 2010; Crocq and Mareska, 2010). Indeed, an analysis of those books helps understand Schneider's persona: what she represented in the couple, how she was represented, the shifting gender power relation between them, and the magnitude of their enduring popularity – for example, a photograph of Delon and Schneider in *La Piscine* (Jacques Deray, 1969) was used to illustrate the cover of Isabelle Giordano's book *Passionnément! Les grands amants du XX^{e} siècle* (2009).

The couple is thus a predominant notion in the media construction of Schneider's persona. Apart from the relationship with Delon, Schneider's professional partnership and friendship with French director Claude Sautet was also crucial to her identity. Important too was the Italian filmmaker Luchino Visconti, to whom Schneider referred as her 'master', the 'one who taught her everything' (interview by France Roche, 1961). The concept of the Pygmalion myth is here enlightening; one may wonder how the discourses of 'discovery' and 'blooming' of the star informed her persona, as they

diminished Schneider's agency by attributing her achievements and screen performances to the vision of 'genius' (male) directors. In her essay 'From Bardot to Binoche: the Pygmalion myth and artistic collaboration in French cinema' (2011) Nicoletta Bazgan looks at three artistic collaborations that exemplify this feature in French cinema and at their changing significations through decades – Roger Vadim and Brigitte Bardot, Jean-Luc Godard and Anna Karina, and Leos Carax and Juliette Binoche. From one case to another the artistic dynamic of the Pygmalion myth changes, in line with the progressive recognition of the actresses' creative authority. Despite a number of differences, like Bardot for Vadim and Karina for Godard, Schneider was a 'muse' for Sautet, an artistic commodity for a director's cinematic vision. The concepts of 'star couple' and 'Pygmalion myth' are both important for my study in terms of charting Schneider's evolving star image over the course of her career.

Beside entries on Schneider in the *International dictionary of films and filmmakers* (Sieglohr, in Sara Pendergast and Tom Pendergast, 2000), and *Journeys of desire* (Carter, in Vincendeau and Phillips, 2006), a few scholarly works indirectly related to Schneider have appeared, in particular articles and book chapters about her films, such as the *Sissi*s (Wauchope, 2002; Carter, 2010; Schlipphacke, 2010; Krämer, 2012), *La Banquière* (Gabrysiak, 2015) and *La Piscine* (Chaplin, 2015). Françoise Audé wrote a chapter on Schneider in the collective book *Tendres ennemis: cent ans de cinéma entre la France et l'Allemagne* (Gassen and Hurst, 1991) that offers an overview of the complex cinematic relations between France and Germany. While the book assembles a number of scholarly contributions (amongst whom Thomas Elsaesser and Ginette Vincendeau), Audé's chapter verges on cultural journalism (she was a well-known film critic for *Positif*) and covers well-known (yet accurate) information on the star. The interview of Claude Sautet by Heike Hurst following Audé's text embraces a sensationalist tone but offers some key details on their fruitful collaboration in the 1970s.

Adopting a scholarly approach, Nina Zimnick's chapter dedicated to Schneider in *Rhine crossings: France and Germany in love and war* (Brueggemann and Schulman, 2005) discusses the star's image through the complex French-German reception of *La Passante du Sans-Souci* (Jacques Ruffio, 1982), drawing a parallel between the film's narrative and Schneider's personal life. According to Zimnik, the film shows how Schneider's life and career were constructed in a way that reinvigorated the romantic Francophile view of Germans wishing to escape post-war traumatic issues. I concur with the interpretation of Zimnik who sees Schneider as an embodiment of

Vergangenheitsbewältigung (coming to terms with the past) by reflecting the views and experiences of a generation of West German women in the 1970s. The only scholarly volume entirely dedicated to Schneider is the 13th issue (edited by Armin Jäger in 2009) of *Film-Konzepte*, a German-language journal founded in 2006 by Thomas Koebner. *Film-Konzepte* adopts a monographic approach and concentrates on influential international filmmakers although a few stars are examined as well. Like Korte and Lowry (2000), the journal includes sections on the Sissi years, the influence of Visconti, the films with Sautet, the Occupation films, and the 'eccentric' Schneider. Schneider's 1960s international career or her trans-European stardom are not considered. Manuela Reichert's essay 'Ein Kameragesicht' though touches on the fascinating question of Schneider's photogeny and 'presence' and analyses the star's expressive eyes through a selection of roles, notably Leni from *The Trial* (Orson Welles, 1962); the examination of her relationship with the camera offers insight into Schneider's approach to her characters. Andrea Bandauer's chapter in *Stars in world cinema: film icons and star systems across cultures* (2015) offers useful insights into Schneider's melodramatic performance style and on- and off-screen representations of the tragic. Bandauer's otherwise excellent text, like the few other academic contributions dedicated to Schneider, tends to overstate aspects such as the blending between her on- and off-screen 'tragic' persona, while it brushes aside many nuances of her complex and constantly evolving image. While the works reviewed above have provided me with many useful insights into Schneider, I aim in this thesis to offer a more systematic, detailed and up-to-date study of the star.

* * *

I have hitherto delineated the theoretical and critical framework that guides my research. The multifaceted nature of my topic requires a plural approach, hence the inclusion of industrial, historical, cultural and gender-related questions regarding the study of stars as social discourses alongside film representation of national and feminine identity. The concepts introduced so far will reappear throughout the thesis and, even when they are not explicitly referred to, it is through the complexity they entail, as well as the relationship between them, that I have been able to articulate the arguments presented in the following chapters.

I approach Schneider's life and career chronologically and therefore divide my thesis in three parts, each one corresponding to a major period in the star's career. The first part focuses on her Germanic phase in the 1950s – when she embodied the ingénue and became a screen icon as Sissi in continental Europe. Here, I dissect her relationship with German-speaking cinema and media. The second part is dedicated to what I call her 'international phase' in the 1960s when she develops a new identity as a sensual and sophisticated woman. Finally, the third part of my study is on her French career in the 1970s and early 1980s. During this phase, which corresponded to important social and cultural changes in women's lives and identities with the rise of the women's movement, Schneider's persona was constructed in relation to a paradoxical image of ostensibly 'modern' yet vulnerable womanhood, crystallised in Claude Sautet's films; this image then developed into that of a 'tragic victim' in *rétro* and Occupation films, and, in turn, evolved into a more extreme, at times morbid identity in a set of films that drew on, and foregrounded, her highly-regarded melodramatic performance. Her film roles during this last phase were increasingly perceived as echoing her personal life, at the time and ever since.

Despite significant developments of star studies in French, German and trans-European cinemas, and despite Schneider's impressive career and popularity, the star has still never been the subject to an in-depth, scholarly study. It is now time to fill this resonant gap. Through examining Schneider's changing depictions of femininity – examining what types of gender dynamics and relationships are at play –, the figure of the star in terms of her biography and of the social and cultural context surrounding her, I seek to understand how a female star persona such as Schneider's contributes to the history of women's representation. Furthermore, and owing to the actress working in various national film industries and being perceived through different national media and acting in different languages, this thesis deals with the history and experiences of women in Western European cultures from the 1950s to the early 1980s – and bringing her legacy to the present day in my conclusion. By studying the historical implications of Schneider's image spanning her filmic and extra-filmic persona and by reflecting through a feminist lens on her career and legacy, I hope to contribute to a critical understanding of a major star who has so far been neglected, as well as to a key period of the post-war European star-system.

PART I

Romy Schneider's Germanic Career: 1953-1959

Introduction: Romy before *Sissi* (1953-1955)

This first part focuses on the construction of Romy Schneider's star image at the beginning of her career in German and Austrian cinemas that culminated with the *Sissi* series. I discuss the ways her star image developed with regards to three core aspects – an on- and off-screen mother-daughter relationship, her identification with historical costume films, and the ideological component of Schneider's persona in relation to the context of post-war West Germany and Austria. Throughout those main features ran the notion of submission – to her mother and to a nation –, with the important question being how and why the young actress ended up embodying such a successful image of the modern young woman in films that appeared, even at the time, out-dated.

* * *

Romy Schneider was born Rosemarie Magdalena Albach on 23rd September 1938 in Vienna, a few months after the capital became a Nazi Third Reich city due to the *Anschluss*. She lived there only a few weeks and grew up in the Bavarian Alps, in her parents' isolated property named 'Mariengrund' in Schönau am Königssee, Germany. This was near Nazism's hotbed Berchtesgaden where the 'Berghof' was located, Adolf Hitler's second residence since 1924 and one of his headquarters during World War II. The reference to Germany's modern history comes early in this study because Germany's historical past was and still is omnipresent when one approaches Schneider's star image.

Romy Schneider's mother, German actress Magda Schneider, was an important figure of German cinema. She became popular in 1933 when she starred in Max Ophüls's *Liebelei*. She married Wolfgang Albach-Retty, an Austrian an actor and son of Rosa Retty, a famous theatre actress at the Burgtheater in Vienna. Magda and Wolf starred in several romantic films before divorcing in 1945. Being the daughter of two prominent actors with busy schedules, Romy and her younger brother were mainly raised by their maternal grandparents in 'Mariengrund'. Later in the 1960s it was discovered that Romy Schneider's parents were exempted from tax by the Nazi Propaganda Ministry and that

Magda was a close acquaintance of Gerda Buch, the wife of the Nazi Party Chancellery's head and Hitler's private secretary Martin Bormann. Hitler himself was an admirer of Magda and they met probably more than once – there is film footage of at least one meeting that was recently discovered and is frequently used in documentaries about the star, especially French portraits. Magda's unclear connection with the Nazi regime impacted her daughter's perception of Germany; it also influenced how Romy Schneider's persona was polarised and differently received in Germanic and Francophone territories. Magda became increasingly known from 1953 as the ambitious mother who turned her attention to her beautiful teenage daughter, and decided to focus on promoting Romy in major productions rather than herself. When she did not appear alongside Romy on screen (eight films in total), she supervised her daughter's acting choices and negotiated contracts.

* * *

Romy Schneider started her career in 1953, at the age of 15, in popular German-speaking cinema (operetta films[1] and historical costume films, mostly remakes). After two supporting roles in *Wenn der weiße Flieder wieder blüht* / *When the white lilacs bloom again* (Hans Deppe, 1953) and *Feuerwerk* / *Fireworks* (Kurt Hoffmann, 1954), Romy could have been typecast as the ingénue in operetta films, but the importance of the 'princess' roles that she moved on to play and the dynamism of the duo formed with her mother would have a greater impact on her whole career. Her first major film role was in 1954 as young Queen Victoria in *Mädchenjahre einer Königin* / *Victoria in Dover* (Ernst Marischka, 1954). This biopic with elements of romantic comedy narrates the early reign of the Queen, from her ascension to the throne in 1837 to her fortuitous love encounter in a Dover inn with her cousin Prince Albert and their engagement. Magda Schneider played the Queen's governess and confidante, Baroness Lehzen.

The defining elements of the Sissi image can be traced back to this film: the relationship with a mother figure (yet again portrayed by the actress's mother in the *Sissi*s), the girlish status of a young queen, a first true love, the escape motif, the connection between love and reason of State. At the release of the film over the Christmas

[1] See Richard Traubner (2007), 'Der deutsche Operettenfilm vor und nach 1933' (in Wolfgang Schaller ed.), pp. 147-169.

holidays in Austria and West Germany, the parallel drawn by the press between Victoria's immature but innocent personality and the 'charming and graceful performance' of the actress – is manifest (*Illustriertre Woche*, 04/12/1954). Victoria has to be guided step by step, closely advised and watched over by an entourage of adults, including one played by the actress's own mother.

This protective, on-screen relationship between the maternal figure and the child echoed the off-screen one. The two appeared together in public events and other numerous promotion tours where they were seen as a perfect duo: the obedient and proper daughter, supported in a promising career by her mother who had experience of the film business and progressively made way for her daughter. Moreover, this (lucrative) mother-daughter combination was overseen by Magda's second husband and businessman Hans Herbert Blatzheim who managed Romy's and the family's finances.

Schneider's first five films[2] were distributed only in West Germany and Austria (with a couple exceptions for Belgium, Netherlands and Sweden); her star image construction therefore began on the national, and even local level.[3] *Feuerwerk*, *Die Deutschmeister* / *A March for the Emperor* (Marischka, 1955), and *Mädchenjahre einer Königin* are historical films and their popularity would be significant for Schneider's career. In Vienna, *Die Deutschmeister* ranked second and *Mädchenjahre einer Königin* fourth of all films released that year. This is an impressive score for Schneider, who thus was in two films in the top five out of 1,000 films exhibited that year in Viennese cinemas[4]. These figures show the popularity of a 'formula' that already by 1955, only two years after her debut, encased Schneider's core image for German-speaking audience in romantic costume films. Additionally, the fact that Schneider's commercial successes were films set in the past shows that those historical times carried a resonant cultural value for the 1950s public.

As many scholars have argued, the Germanic nations' politics and public opinion remained relatively stable in the aftermath of World War II, and part of this stability resulted from a near total oblivion of their Nazi past – the defeated nations and their

[2] Schneider's last film before *Sissi* was *Der letzte Mann* / *The Last Man* (Harald Braun, 1955), but it had no impact on the shaping of her star image and failed at the box office.

[3] These early films were all distributed European-wide (and worldwide for *Mädchenjahre einer Königin*) after the release of *Sissi*.

[4] http://www.wien.gv.at/rk/historisch/1956/juni.html (last accessed: 07/07/2015).

populations who had knew humiliation and destruction were not ready to engage with the acknowledgment process yet. People instead looked back to their golden years of strength, pride and fulfilment (see Santner, 1990; Hake, 2008). I will come back to this specific context in the following chapter. Schneider's emerging stardom in the mid-1950s answered to a critical time for that wounded territory, and she gradually became a polarised symbol. On the one hand, as a starlet, the face of light-hearted comedies, she was the meeting point of hopeful and promising perspectives for Germanic nations, and in some sense of modernity. On the other hand, her persona was shaped by the inferior status and lack of power of her characters, and in accordance to the puritan social and family values of the 1950s' 'reactionary ideology' as Johannes Von Molke rightly puts it (2002, p. 19). As Erica Carter (1997) argues, the experience of National Socialism left German seeking security in economic stability and family relations, which was one explanation for Germany's return to models of tradition, propriety, and celebration of domestic labour (see Nolan, 1994). These binary oppositions – independence/the future vs submissiveness/the past – established the first paradox of the early Schneider's star image: youth, freshness, and modernity cohabitated with patriarchy and a reactionary mindset whose values became progressively 'weakened' in regard to the status of women in the post-war socio-cultural context of (the) 'Wirtschaftswunder' ('economic miracle') in West Germany and Austria (see Carter, 1997; Krämer, 2012). Schneider's characters express a desire to witness change in their life and to be part of a renewal, but their wishful thinking threatens the status quo, the tacit order established by older generations. Ultimately their longings are fulfilled but never in their initial state, considered excessive, and the adults gently redirect the young women towards a more suitable path that appears like *their* choice.

Particularly striking in *Mädchenjahre einer Königin* and another founding element to Schneider 'princess' star image, was the historical wardrobe that, in addition to its romantic image (with details such as pink roses and lace trimming), fortuitously lengthened her silhouette; the full-length costumes covered the only 'weakness'[5] in her physique – her short legs. Scholars such as Pam Cook (1996), Andrew Higson (2006), Julianne Pidduck (2004), and Belén Vidal (2012a) have explored the importance of costume in terms of affect; in Vidal's terms, they heighten the 'temporality of the period

[5] By 'weakness' I mean departure from conventional Western norms of white female beauty.

film' as an '*emotionally* charged space' that 'shows a preference for *affective* rather than intellectual histories' (p. 21, my emphasis).

After the success of *Mädchenjahre einer Königin*, Schneider became renowned as the fresh starlet whose beauty and pose were selected, once again by Marischka, for playing historical figures. The 'first Schneider paradox' as I call it – embodying the fresh young girl while performing characters from the past – soon set in motion a repeated and normalised image of the actress at premieres, galas and balls wearing film costumes instead of modern and couture dresses.

Thus, from the beginning of Schneider's career two major tendencies emerged and increasingly appropriated the actress's private life into her persona: family narratives, that were played on and off screen, and the importance of costume films. Both trends were then combined and developed tenfold in the *Sissi* films that revealed and set to a wider international public the image of the young Schneider

Chapter I. *Sissi*: Romy becomes European

Introduction

At the age of 17, between August and November 1955, Schneider filmed *Sissi*. At the time, she proudly wrote in her journal that a 'German magazine's survey ranked her second place of the most popular actors' (between Maria Schell and Ruth Leuwerik), only two years and five films after her debuts (Schneider and Seydel, 1989, p. 97). *Sissi* was a phenomenal success with German-speaking audiences in the year following its release over the 1955 Christmas holidays in Austria and West Germany, and was subsequently well-received in other European countries, to become the most successful German-speaking film of the 1950s on the continent. The role of *Sissi* and what it represented in 1950s Austria and West Germany was the culmination of Schneider's previous characters and film narratives. After their hits of *Mädchenjahre einer Königin* and *Die Deutschmeister*, *Sissi*'s production company Erma-Film and producer Karl Ehrlich expected the film to do well, but the overwhelming audience response to it was not anticipated. Two successful sequels followed: *Sissi, Die junge Kaiserin* / *Sissi, the young Empress* (1956) and *Sissi, Schicksalsjahre einer Kaiserin* / *Sissi, the fateful years of an Empress* (1957)[1]. Production plans for a fourth film was abandoned, because, as I shall explore later, Schneider refused to be cast again despite a sensational salary offer of 1 million Deutschmarks[2] (Krämer, 2012, p. 342).

This chapter considers Schneider crossing borders, and explores the evidence that attests her development into a trans-European star. The Sissi period in Schneider's first career in German-speaking cinema is of vital importance, for it lays the foundation of a significant aspect of her changeable star image that would continue to resonate throughout her career. There was a confluence between Schneider's national and transnational images: the period 1955-1957 was the moment she emerged as a European star, and yet she became attached to a specific national culture, notably the costume film, a genre very popular in post-war Austria[3].

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[1] In the following, I shall refer to the respective films of the trilogy as *Sissi 1*, *Sissi 2*, and *Sissi 3*.

[2] The average equivalent of 84,900,000 US dollars in 2015.

[3] For a thorough analysis of the genre and its role in the process of building a new national identity in post-World War II Austria see the chapter 'The Historical costume film' in Maria Fritsche (2013), *Homemade men in postwar Austrian cinema: nationhood, genre and masculinity*, pp. 59-99. For a discussion on the

1. The Reception of the *Sissi* trilogy

Like *Mädchenjahre einer Königin* and *Die Deutschmeister*, the *Sissi* films were written and directed by Austrian filmmaker Ernst Marischka, who had nurtured the project for many years (Krenn, 2013a, p. 67). Although the films clearly belong to the historical costume genre (see Fritsche, 2013), they are also a combination of several other genres – romantic film, family drama, Heimatfilm (see Von Molke, 2002 and 2005), and even fairy tale (Korte and Lowry, 2000, p. 113). The films dismiss most, if not all, of the negative aspects of the life of the real Elisabeth of Austria (which ended tragically[4]). Although they touch on the Empress's taste for travel, her tendency to flee, and hint of her deep dissatisfaction and melancholy, her life is heavily romanticised in the narrative. *Sissi 1* presents the romantic fortuitous encounter in 1853 in Bad Ischl (Upper Austria) and the courtship between young Princess Elisabeth of Bavaria (Sissi) and Habsburg Emperor Franz Joseph (Karlheinz Böhm), who is at first promised to become engaged to Sissi's elder sister Helene (nicknamed Nene and played by Uta Franz). The film ends with their wedding at the Augustinerkirche in Vienna on 24th April 1854. The second instalment focuses on Elisabeth's struggles to adjust to her new life at the Vienna imperial court after her wedding, then centres on the tense relationship with her mother-in-law Archduchess Sophie (Vilma Degischer), the birth of her first child, her attempts to make peace with Hungarian dissidents on behalf of her husband, and the imperial couple's final coronation as King and Queen of Hungary. The third film narrates Sissi's illness, her recuperation in Madeira and Corfu in the company of her supportive mother Duchess Ludovika (Magda Schneider), and an official visit to Italian territories, where a hostile crowd in Venice begins to cheer, won over by the touching reunion of Sissi and her daughter Gisela (Helga Jesch).

1.1. A Variety of approaches

While the films have been embraced by audiences, at the time of their original release they were rejected by most German-speaking critics who disapproved of the trilogy's alleged aesthetic irrelevance (its glossiness and kitsch aspect), its shallowness, and its

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interchangeable terms 'costume', 'historical', or 'heritage' see Sue Harper (1994), *Picturing the past: the rise and fall of the British costume film*; and Andrew Higson (2003), *English heritage, English cinema: costume drama since 1980*, pp. 9-11.

[4] Elisabeth of Austria (1837-1898) was stabbed to death by an Italian anarchist in Geneva, Switzerland.

sugar-coated and mendacious distortion of History. That rejection probably explains why, for many years, scholarly attention was generally limited to plot descriptions in German and Austrian film historiographies (e.g. Bessen, 1989, pp. 319-328; Barthel, 1986, pp. 239-249; Jary, 1993, pp. 143-152). Even when the films were the objects of more in-depth analysis, they have mostly been considered as indicating the regressive and traditional politics attributed to the Heimat genre of the 1950s, with its representations of an idyllic pastoral Germanic nation, a gentle 'cure' for contemporary and distressing national histories. One could argue at length against this scholarly trend, especially the pairing of 1950s German and Austrian cinemas (Seidl, 1987; Bergfelder, 2006, pp. 31, 40; Wauchope, 2007), and the inaccurate tendency to consider the latter a subcategory, a 'variation' (Fritsche, 2013, p. 11), of the former. However, this is not the place to engage into more discussion on the matter.

There are now substantial scholarly works in German and English that expand the investigation and cover many aspects of the *Sissi* trilogy. Amongst them, studies by Gerhard Bliersbach (1985) and Susanne Marschall (1997) offer more comprehensive readings, pointing out that the films' depictions of the Habsburg family set during the 1850s examine complex family structures and dynamics that are more germane to the social situation in post-war West Germany and Austria. Other research focuses largely on the popular title protagonist. In these studies, Sissi is usually seen as young and vulnerable, fighting the traditional power structures of the Vienna court through her spontaneity, innocence, and authenticity (Korte and Lowry, 2000, p. 117). Georg Seeßlen (1992a, 1992b) points to the character's significance in the 1950s in light of post-war destruction and Holocaust guilt. Sissi plays a 'central role as a "figure of salvation"' who operates through her 'innocence and energy to "deliver" men from their guilt and at the same time give new glory to qualities necessary for reconstruction' (1992a, p. 12). In other words, the character represents the 'promise of regeneration', a concept suggested by Heide Fehrenbach (1995) in her seminal study of popular German cinema of the 1950s (which nonetheless neglects the *Sissi* series). Some more recent publications on 1950s German cinema, such as Sabine Hake's *German national cinema* (2002, p. 114) and the anthology *Take two. Fifties cinema in a divided Germany* (Davidson and Hake, 2007), hardly mention the *Sissi*s. Mary Wauchope (2002) however suggests a positive reading of the films, highlighting their popular quality on behalf of Austria's national image, and Erica Carter (2010) analyses the films through the lens of victimhood and nostalgia. Focussing on the Sissi character, she conducts a formal analysis of colour palette,

composition and camera movement, which she sees as signalling an aesthetic memory of the Austrian Empire and its imperial past through the 'representational models' of the Biedermeier period (1815-1848) and Third Reich films (p. 93).

In other significant works, Heidi Schlipphacke (2010) suggests a queer reading of the trilogy, Nadja Krämer (2012) considers models of masculinity in post-war Germany in relation to the films, and so does Maria Fritsche (2013) who focuses on the complex Austrian 'process of social reorganisation' (p. 5) and nationhood reconstruction. Although I will come back to these contrasted readings of the character, often calling them forth to support my own analysis, the object of my examination through the films remains Romy Schneider as a star. My approach to the image of Schneider in the *Sissi* trilogy and the star's European appeal is multifaceted. By analysing the narratives (character's development), themes (my examination of the films has to be embedded in their social, political, and economic contexts[5], and with regard to post-war gender discourses, especially the role of women), and the aesthetics (performance and costume analyses) of Schneider's presence in the films, I intend to demonstrate that the 17-year-old actress's stardom in the mid-1950s was not only part of the dominant identity and gender discourse on nationhood, but that her image was key to the films' successful European export.

Although there was a Europe-wide interest in the *Sissi* trilogy from 1956 – with the notable exception of the UK – there is little work on exportability and reception discourses on the films outside of the German-speaking film markets.[6] I will try to fill this gap here, since an understanding of Schneider's status as a European star and the strong resonance of her image in France is instrumental to my argument in this chapter. Considering the paucity of film data available across continental Europe, I have limited my reception analysis to German-speaking countries and francophone regions. I use two sets of sources: statistical film data such as box office figures, and works on reception markets and on national and popular film markets in Austria, West Germany, France, and Belgium. All point to the films' massive popularity with filmgoers, an observation that is

[5] Historical films are significant indicators of the socio-political context in which they were made: Pierre Sorlin states that 'nearly all films refer, if indirectly, to current events' (1980, p. 18). See also Derek Elley (1984), *The epic film: myth and history*, p. 6; and Fritsche, 2013, p. 59-60.

[6] Fei-Hsien Wang and Ke-chin Hsia's chapters (in Hametz and Schlipphacke, 2018, pp. 181-214) on the *Sissi* films' reception in China represent a welcome contribution, though also an exception.

corroborated by scholarly works (Albrecht, 1985, pp. 80-81; Garncarz, 1994, p. 125; Carter, 2010, p. 81; Schlipphacke, 2010, p. 232; and Krämer, 2012, p. 370, Hametz and Schlipphacke, 2018, to name a few).

1.2. Sissi at home

Except for France for which there are precise box office and attendance records from 1945, it is much more difficult to obtain those numbers for other countries, including Austria and West Germany. Yet, some comprehensive studies offer useful indications[7]. Although I have no way of knowing the exact domestic attendance records of the screening of the *Sissi*s[8], there are grounds for suggesting that the trilogy was the most successful German-speaking film of the 1950s in Austria and West Germany since the end of Wold War II (Krämer, 2012, p. 341). My methodology follows Joseph Garncarz (1994, pp. 94-135) in using Top Ten figures, which I correlate with secondary sources, and also includes readings that hypothesise about the relationship between the *Sissi* films and larger processes of national identity formation and *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (see later). My research shows that the first film is the most popular one of the cycle. *Sissi 1* gained the first place in *Film-Echo*'s 1955/1956 'Top Ten' in West Germany (Garncarz, 1994, p. 125), with, according to Heidi Schlipphacke (2010, p. 232), ten million tickets sold for the film premiere in December 1955. Erica Carter (2012, p. 81), citing the film distributor Herzog-Film's press pack of *Sissi 2* reflecting on the success of their first opus, advances the number of twelve millions. One indicator frequently mentioned to illustrate the success of *Sissi 1* in West Germany is that it exceeded the box office record held so far in the new Republic by *Gone with the Wind* (Victor Fleming, 1939) (Albrecht, 1985,

[7] Joseph Garncarz (1994, pp. 94-135) calculated and reassembled the lists of the most popular films (the 'Top Ten') distributed in West Germany and usually published in magazines such as *Film-Echo* for the period 1952/53-1972. Therefore, there are no tangible attendance numbers for the *Sissi* trilogy in West Germany, but rather, and according to the cinema owners who rated the commercial success of the films on a scale of 1 to 7, indicators of their immense popularity (p. 120).

[8] It is worth noting that it may in fact exist records for the screening of the *Sissi* trilogy that could be found for instance in local archives with documents on local cinemas. In that regard, regional research by local history and media history scholars are paramount as they contribute to paint a bigger and more detailed picture of a nation's cinematic history (see Knut, 1993).

p. 80).[9] *Sissi 2* and *Sissi 3* ranked respectively second and third places in the 'Top Ten' for 1956/1957 and 1957/1958 (Garncarz, 1994, pp. 125-126) in West Germany.

The reasons for this Germanic success have been thoroughly and expansively analysed. The 1950s was a period of historical significance for two reasons: firstly, it constitutes the heyday of Austrian popular cinema, and secondly, the concept of Austria as the nation that we know today emerged during the post-war decade (Fritsche, 2013, p. 3). It is crucial to detail the historical context to understand the meaning of Marischka's trilogy. Austria came out of World War II defeated and, right after the end of the war, emerged what is commonly known as the victimhood narrative (Austrians citizens and soldiers were the 'first victims' of German Nazis), which after the Waldheim debate in 1986[10] was denounced as a 'historical lie' (Uhl, 2011, p. 185). But from 1947 on, for many Austrians the victim thesis gave way to a heroism counter-narrative that lasted nearly a decade, until the 'liberation' from the Allied 'Occupation' with the ratification of the Austrian State Treaty in May 1955 (Uhl, pp. 186-189) when Austria regained its national independence (shortly before de premiere of *Sissi 1* in December).

During those uncertain times, political elites sought to absolve Austria from any involvement in Nazi war crimes (Bruckmüller, 1985, p. 520). In order to do so, they attempted to *distance* Austria from Germany (against most scholarship on Austrian cinema, too prompt to include Austrian and German cinemas under the same banner, Fritsche, 2013, p. 4). Political and later popular discourses claimed fundamental intellectual and cultural differences between Austrian and German people, making ample use of popular national stereotypes. The creation of a new national identity required more than negating the German element, but an arsenal of positive features that could evoke pride (Hanisch, 1994, p. 161-163), such as the 'felix Austria' myth[11] (Bischof, 1997) and

[9] Although, as previously said, substantial numbers to compare those 'records' are either non-existent or lost.

[10] Kurt Josef Waldheim was President of Austria from 1986 to 1992, and while he was running for president in 1985 the revelation of his service as an intelligence officer in the Wehrmacht raised international controversy; it is since then that 'the public commemoration of the fallen soldiers became an issue of public debate again' (Uhl, 2011, p. 196).

[11] 'Allii gerant bella, tu felix Austria nube' is a founder myth of Austrian historical memory – its pacifism. This idea, forged during the Cold War, considered Austria the child prodigy of neutrality, an 'island of the blessed' between the two powerful and antagonist blocks (Bischof, 1997).

the nation's imperial history and cultural heritage, which were extensively featured in historical costume film.

Historical costume film regularly topped the lists of the most successful films at the time in Austria. Moreover, Austrian costume films (*Kaiserwalzer*, 1953, *Der Feldherrnhügel*, 1953, *Kaisermanöver*, 1954, and *Mädchenjahre einer Königin* and *Die Deutschmeister* with Schneider) proved to be highly exportable to other German-speaking countries (Fritsche, 2013, p. 61). Several factors explain the appeal of the genre: first, it provided escape and spectacle through its music, the sumptuous costumes, and splendid settings (shot on location in the case of Schneider's films) of the imperial palaces of Vienna and the countryside. Secondly, historical costume films offered reassurance and a source of identification: they depicted people lived happily and in harmony, hardly disturbed by violent conflicts or politics, but in the knowledge that their nation was grand and powerful. The genre also exalted the values and life of the lower middle-class and eulogised sacrifice (the character of Sissi is a telling example: she sacrifices her freedom and her lively personality in favour of her husband). It argued that true happiness lies in the simple life and not in the pursuit of a higher social status (again, the *Sissi* films with Sissi's childhood home in peaceful Possenhofen, particularly her father's simple lifestyle and easy-going philosophy epitomise this perspective). These narratives reverberated with Austrian society that had experienced two decades of political turmoil and war, and was now confronted with an uncertain future, wishing for stability and harmony.

Historical films offer an interpretation of the historical past that shapes our views of History, and the choice of historical periods is meaningful (Sorlin, 1980, p. 21). The reign of Franz Joseph (Emperor of Austria from 1848 to 1916) still evokes memories of glory, especially the last decades of the Austria-Hungarian Empire (though marred by social and ethnic conflicts, see Fritsche, 2013, pp. 70-71). In the light of the atrocities committed by the Nazi regime, the post-war Austrian film industry revived the memory of former greatness, inventing a past of imperial splendour and civic harmony that spoke to Austrian *and* German audiences, who had *both* experienced a painful loss of status as citizens of a once powerful nation. Thus, with primary motifs such as innocence, filial love and youth, associated with glorious landscapes, the *Sissi* films were in line with a pattern followed by many Germanic post-war films: the beneficial, almost healing

depiction of a 'lost' era transfigured into a beautiful world by nostalgia[12] and the means of fictional cinema.

Moreover, this evocative pattern is commonly considered part of the 1950s' Germanic political and cultural process of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, which can be roughly translated by 'coming to terms with the past' (Seeßlen, 1992a, pp. 10-14; Seeßlen, 1992b, pp. 65-79; Korte and Lowry, 2000, pp. 113-119). In this view, the figure of the innocent girl, in this instance Sissi, has significant resonance in 1950s Austria *and* West Germany. During those sensitive times, Sissi could be read as the face of redemption. With her youthful energy she 'redeems' men and bears the burden of the fathers' generation with the qualities necessary to rebuild new nations, especially via her positive influence on Franz Joseph as the modern vision of the moderate new man (Bliersbach, 1989, p. 172; Seeßlen, 1992a, p. 12; Fritsche, 2013, p. 83). She revitalises the man in charge of the nation and thus secures the perpetuation of the Empire by giving an heir to the crown (Seeßlen, 1992b, p. 74).

I concur also with the interpretation of Susanne Marschall, who emphasises the familial and national significations attributed to the Sissi figure and who sees the role of the 'innocent angel' as the symbol of a 'new ethical foundation for a new social order' (1997, p. 382). Unlike Gerhard Bliersbach and Georg Seeßlen, who considered the character a sign of compensation, Marschall's approach is more favourably nuanced: in her insightful essay she regards Sissi and the 'childlike' Schneider as a model of virtue who projected long neglected high moral standards such as 'grief, hope, sacrifice, pacifism, progressive view, and gentleness' (p. 382).

1.3. Sissi in Europe

The *Sissi* trilogy had an equally successful run in the other continental European film markets (see Appendix 2). According to my research, *Sissi 1* was one of the most successful films distributed in continental Europe at the time. *Sissi 1* was the second most popular film in France in 1957 with a total number of 6,497,043 spectators (Simsi, 2012, p. 22), but *Sissi 2* dropped down to 1,275,021[13] to rise back up to 5,149,522 for *Sissi 3* in

[12] For more on nostalgia see Svetlana Boym's book *The future of nostalgia* (2001).

[13] This surprising 'drop' (despite that more than one million viewers was still an impressive number for the time) could be due to some kind of an 'overflow' as both *Sissi 1* and *Sissi 2* were released in French cinemas only five months apart in 1957.

1958, ranking fourth place of the most popular films that year (p. 23). *Sissi 1* was a blockbuster also in Netherlands, Denmark and Belgium (especially in Brussels and Antwerp) where excellent box office results were reported by *La Cinégraphie belge* (see also Albrecht, 1985, p. 80). In other countries, such as Spain, Italy, Portugal, Greece, Ireland, Sweden, Finland, where German-speaking films had hitherto failed to gain a foothold so far, *Sissi 1* had impressively long cinema runs that were only comparable to the most successful US films (Albrecht, p. 80; Schneider and Seydel, 1989, p. 115). This tremendous popularity is confirmed by the extensive press coverage and the numerous magazine covers figuring Schneider at the time, with a clear preference for photos of the young star dressed in her character's costumes (see later). It also appears that in countries where Schneider's previous films were released, they had established a solid fan base, especially *Mädchenjahre einer Königin*, which confirms my assumption that the appeal of Schneider as a star resides in a romantic persona that was developed early on in her career and further thrived in *Sissi 1*.

Although *Sissi 2* and *Sissi 3* were selected to represent Austria at the Cannes Film Festival in 1957 and 1958, and box office results were still high, domestically and abroad, the success's trilogy had slightly dwindled by the release of *Sissi 3*. For example, according to the Norwegian cinema association Film & Kino and the Instituto de la Cinematografía y la Artes audiovisuales, the last film was never distributed in Norway, nor was it released in Spain until 1974. The explanation for *Sissi 1*'s popular preference over the last two films might lie, on the one hand, in the 'novelty effect' that might consist of Schneider's star quality (her freshness), and on the other hand with the film narrative that revolves around a classic 'fairy-tale story' (Fritsche, 2013, pp. 80, 83). The second and last films tend to leave aside the spontaneity of the princess to show instead her struggle to find her place and to fit into a rather hostile environment (the strict ceremonial of the court personified by Archduchess Sophie), and address Sissi's motherly issues and other 'adult' topics such as politics.

The trilogy's common ground with a fairy-tale tradition sheds another light on its post-war success in West Germany. According to Jack Zipes (2002), fairy tale is a reference in German culture 'for self-comprehension and *Weltanschauung*' ('philosophy of life') (p. 121), it is a national institution based on 'compensatory images of reconciliation' (p. 118); he argues that there is a German disposition to resolve social conflicts 'within art, within subjectively constructed realms' (p. 121). When adding the overall 'continuing, conservative longing for order' (Giloi, 2011, p. 360) that was

prevailing in western Europe in the 1950s, we can comprehend the appeal of cultural products such as the *Sissi* films that offered the (alleged) glamour of court life. *Sissi*s' fairy-tale narrative combines different classical motifs (a royal family, scheming matchmakers, mistaken identities, the heroin becomes a wife in a romantic ascent, she has to overcome forces that oppose her love) which appear to create optimum conditions to appeal to audiences' emotions, especially through Sissi's difficult relation with her mother-in-law, rendering her more relatable. Thus the nostalgic inclination that I have examined regarding Austrian audiences seemed to speak to audiences in other European countries as well.

Whereas the films were successful in Austria and West Germany – both newly independent republics –, and in France a year later, the absence of a royal family at the head of the state in these nations, and therefore an audience inclination for royalty nostalgia[14], is not the sole explanation for the trilogy's phenomenal success. The *Sissi* trilogy was as much celebrated in monarchies, i.e. Belgium, Netherlands, Denmark, Spain, and Greece where Schneider was received by the King and the Queen at the premiere of *Sissi 2* in Athens (Schneider and Seydel, 1989, p. 129). Nonetheless, the films were not distributed in the UK, which explains why Schneider remains unknown there. What could have been the reason considering their success on the continent? A look at the British trade press does not shed light on this exception. It might have been the chauvinistic attitude adopted by British film industry in the post-war decade that mirrored public opinion regarding West Germany still not viewed as a friend (Hennessy, 1992, p. 261; Geraghty, 2000, p. 95). It could also have been that the prominent place already occupied in 1950s media by the newly accessed and crowned Queen Elizabeth II would have made redundant an extended cinematic narrative on the golden years of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Viewing habits could also explain the absence of the trilogy on British soil where audiences were never keen on films with subtitles (those that crossed the border are usually auteur films, a market to which the *Sissi*s do not belong) nor on dubbing (the films were dubbed in continental Europe, a technical trait that made them more accessible and push forward their success).

[14] European monarchs were a major source of coverage and gossip in the popular press with figures such as Queen Elizabeth II and Princess Margaret in the UK, Queen Fabiola and Princess Paola of Belgium, and Princess Grace of Monaco.

Still, the story told in the *Sissi* cycle is one that travelled effectively. My empirical analysis of box office figures correlated with textual analysis has established that Schneider started to move beyond a persona as Germanic star and captivated European audiences. In the following I will examine the diverse reasons of this popular fascination by analysing how Schneider embodied the Empress and why her casting is so successful.

2. Coming-of-age narratives

Beyond the context of the aftermath of World War II and the thesis of nationhood reconstruction, I identify three ways in which Schneider's border-crossing from German-speaking countries to Europe was enabled. First, it occurred through a narrative development that established the actress as a sexual being; secondly, through the development of a repertoire of gestures and idiosyncrasies that would become her performance signature; and finally, via her appeal to European popular memory through the transition she made visually in the *Sissi* series, establishing an iconography especially by means of costumes, from Princess, to Queen and Empress.

2.1. More than an ingénue: a future wife

This is a good point to establish briefly what I mean by the concept of the 'ingénue'. The term carry a semantic weight and considering its extensive usage in common language and the popularity of the role of the ingénue in theatre, it is surprising that there are few academic studies dedicated to the ingénue *per se*. Susan Weiner's comments on the 18th and 19th centuries' concept of the 'jeune fille' (girl) in her book *Enfants terribles: youth and femininity in the mass media in France, 1945-1968* (2001) help to redress this imbalance, especially in reference to the 'intactness', the 'cultural imperative of female purity', and the '[place of] the female trajectory […] within earthly patriarchal control' that particularly resonate with Schneider (p. 2). The ingénue is the artistic adaptation of the *jeune fille* as a category of identity – sexually ignorant, 'the image of angelic femininity' (p. 3). There are studies of the *jeune fillle*, beginning with Simone de Beauvoir in 1958, and Marcel Bernon and al. in 1983 (both in French), followed by Katherine Dalsmier's psychoanalytic approach to literature about female adolescence (1986); an entire category of gender studies is now dedicated to what is commonly referred to as 'girlhood' and the whole process of growing up (Johnson, 1993).

Patricia Meyer Spacks defines 'coming-of-age' and adolescence as transition from childhood to adulthood, 'the time of life when the individual has developed full sexual

capacity but has not yet assumed a full adult role in society' (1982, p. 7). Through film roles such as Queen Victoria and Stanzi (in *Die Deutschmeister*), and media representation, Schneider had already developed an ingénue persona, and, in *Sissi 1*, the Bavarian Princess is the epitome of such characterisation. From *Sissi 2* Elisabeth began to acquire an erotic image and potentiality as a sexual figure. The ambivalent combination of the ingénue and the eroticised female is, I argue, the source of the character's trans-European and transgenerational appeal. There was two coming-of-age narrative outlined by the *Sissi* films: that of the Sissi character, and that of Schneider as an actress and a star.

Sissi's coming-of-age

Romy Schneider's first appearance characterises Elisabeth in a single stroke. Against a triumphant, joyful, brass soundtrack, she enters the scene on horseback; she rides skilfully, laughing and cheering. After stepping down, Sissi heads for an aviary and feeds her birds. She chats with an old groom about her animals on a joyous tone. Then, surrounded by three dogs, she enters a paddock and bottle-feeds a fawn. This image (fig. 1) of the young Princess crouched in the grass, her smiling and sunlit face, overflowing a rescued natural creature with maternal affection (the baby bottle is the evident link), is the epitome of devotion and sweetness, and her interest in animal wellbeing relates to preservation and love of nature, which connect her to ideas of purity and health. Sissi the girl is spontaneous, pleasant (she expresses genuine concern for the staff), and overflowing with energy; she remains the sweet figure that had already become familiar both in Schneider's star image and to her German-speaking audiences.

Fig. 1. Schneider bottle-feeds a fawn in *Sissi 1* (1955).

Moving on from the opening sequence, Sissi's first encounter with adolescence is related to her body and to sex – the potentiality of sex, which is key in understanding the appeal of the Sissi figure (and consequently Schneider). Franz Joseph is first struck by Sissi's beauty: when he declares his love, he wishes his bride-to-be (Nene) looked more like this sweet stranger, saying that she should have '[her] eyes, [her] mouth, [her] hair'. Later on, when Sissi's royal identity is revealed and Franz Joseph stands up for his choice to his mother, the latter proceeds to 'examine' her niece, calling out her short stature and yellow teeth. To attack the body of young women has always been part of asserting parental – and paternal – dominance, to submit them to the male's 'gentle authority' (de Beauvoir, 1949, pp. 352-355). In *Sissi 1*, while many men already praise Sissi's youthful beauty, the adults in charge (sisters Ludovika and Sophie) try first to undermine the Princess's confidence in her own body in a typical way to induce feminine passivity. Ludovika and Sophie represent the ideal 1950s housewife, dedicated to their children and their wellbeing (marrying them is their duty). The fulfilment for an adult woman is to perpetuate the conventional female order of creating and maintaining a peaceful home, and it is requested of Sissi to follow that lead.

When separated from her parents and her home by marriage, Sissi tries first to fight the rigid structures of the court with her child's quality – her spontaneity. As Sissi Schneider progressively loses the candour of her previous characters to grow into a more self-conscious woman, using her 'feminine charms'. She knows the effect she has on men, and the films' comical relief Gendarmeriemajor Boeckl (Joesf Meinrad), one of the men of the trilogy who falls in love with her, describes her as a 'celestial being'. Sissi becomes more influential: in *Sissi 2* she successfully soothes political tensions between

Franz Joseph and Hungarian aristocrats. She is also associated with motherhood: she opposes the hold of her mother-in-law who intends to raise and educate the baby Princess, and judges the new Empress 'too young' to take care of the infant. To protest, Sissi flees Vienna and seeks refuge in her childhood home. Her demand being ultimately met hides poorly the fact that Sissi still relies on her parents. This example shows the ambiguity of the character: at the adolescent stage, Sissi rejects boundaries (she purchased an anniversary gift herself in the streets of Vienna), refusing to stay put (her escape to Bavaria). Her family assumes her inaptitude and lack of interest in stately matters. Yet, at the same time, Sissi 'contains the principle of salvation' (Meyer Spacks, 1982, p. 14), especially in her royal position – i.e. she is expected to give an heir. Moreover, because she acts on their behalf and believes in their cause, she is often called a 'saviour' by Hungarian characters.

Speaking of Hungarian characters, Sissi's coming-of-age is also well-illustrated in *Sissi 2* and *Sissi 3* through her chaste relationship with the dashing and former Hungarian rebel Count Andrássy (Walter Reyer), who falls desperately in love with her and becomes the holder of the male gaze on Sissi. Just like Franz Joseph, when Andrássy sees Sissi for the first time, he is struck by her physique. The difference between the Emperor and Elisabeth's love at first sight in *Sissi 1* and this encounter lies in the fact that Sissi is now a woman who carries herself with elegance and dignity (see later the section on Schneider's performance). Some hints of a sexualised woman began to emerge. In *Sissi 3*, due to illness, she is recuperating in Corfu and Madera, without a man, in the sole company of her mother. There, she becomes an adult woman while rediscovering the strength of her body, regaining what had systematically been denied since she entered her adolescent stage – her confidence in her body and in herself. However, considering the films' themes embedded in 1950s traditionalist and retrograde moral values, Sissi's next and only choice is to return to her family and to present to the Empire's people the exemplary image of the devoted wife and mother (Moeller, 1989; Krämer, 2012).

Romy's coming-of-age

Sissi's coming-of-age is not the only development charted in the films. Romy Schneider's adolescence, as an individual and as a star, was happening concomitantly. As was the instance with her Queen Victoria character, there was a parallel drawn by contemporary media between Schneider's personal life and the arc of Sissi in Marischka's trilogy. The daughter-mother relationship was emphasised, as well as the rapprochement between the

actress's charming and 'authentic' performance and the winsome personality of the character; with the *Sissi* films the intertwinement reached greater heights. The media discourse read that 'Romy is Sissi', and thus the star had to live the life of a fairy-tale princess. Magda Schneider, managing her daughter's career, facilitated Romy's accessibility to the press, and reporters and photographs were rarely denied (Schneider and Seydel, 1989; Krenn, 2013a). German-speaking media (quickly followed by the European press) pictured Romy as 'living every young woman's dream' (being a star), adapting the fairy-tale narrative of the films to the actress's new glamorous lifestyle. Examples of that media narrative (pushed by an intensive public relations campaign from *Sissi 1*'s distributor Herzog-Film) were numerous; they included excerpts from Schneider's own diary published every Monday during the first two months after the release of *Sissi 1* in the *Deutsche Illustrierte*, and entitled 'Romy Schneider*:* diary of a seventeen-year-old girl', in which she mentioned attending parties and premieres, meeting other stars, her mother's advice, her travels, her doubts and her success's suddenness (which she attributed to her good fortune and hard work); or 'My American journal' published in the *Abendzeitung* in February 1958 (and then in Dutch, Flemish, and French in the Dutch-Belgian magazine *Libelle* two months later), in which she detailed her promotional duties for *Mädchenjahre einer Königin* in New York and Los Angeles. In all likelihood, the aim of the promotion was to give the impression of access to the 'real' life of the star. Schneider's own words had the value of authenticity and truthfulness: she was envied for her lifestyle, but equally praised for sharing it – she was accessible. She was viewed as successful, lucky, and polite, the proper adolescent quietly living with her privileged family in their Bavarian home, and whose sudden popularity has not gone to her head. French reporter François Chalais in his television magazine 'Reflets de Cannes' from the Cannes Film Festival in May 1957 summarised the discourse on Schneider: she 'makes a *timid* apparition' (my emphasis), her Sissi role 'made her virtuous to all the housewives across the Rhine'. The voice-over continues: 'she is like a Maria Schell who does not think of herself as Maria Schell' – i.e. Schneider is a humble, modest, well-mannered, and proper young woman. The star is described as glamorous, but not a snob (her definition of glamour is low-key, reasonable); she is pictured as a contemporary princess, as if Sissi had lived in the mid-1950s (*Film Revue*, 11/12/1956; *Wiener Wochenausgabe*, 29/03/1956; *Illustrierte Berliner*, 02/02/1957; Sanders, 02/02/1957; *Nous Deux Film*, 01/09/1958). Here, the emphasis on living with her parents in the countryside is prime: whilst it connects to many aspects of Sissi in the

films, it also conveys the same notions of preservation, health, and simplicity that were engaging to film audiences. Indeed, the physical and visual progression towards womanhood that are at the centre of the *Sissi* films did not imply that Schneider nor Sissi lost their innocence. The Empress remains infantilised by adults and she is still a romantic idealist.

Particularly telling of the Romy-Sissi conflation and their joint coming-of-age narrative was the subtle shift towards sexualisation. At first, Sissi evokes virginity. She is pure and intact, a trait that influenced Schneider's star image. Between the release of *Sissi 1* and *Sissi 2*, German-speaking media dubbed the 17-year-old actress the 'Virgin of Geiselgasteig'[15] (*Der Spiegel*, 07/03/1956, cover), she was a 'Milchgesicht' – a 'baby face' (*Die Zeit*, quoted in Sudendorf, 2008), a rosy and harmless media creation, which in turn implied the opposite of danger and called forward the concept of protection. Glamorised by costumes (see later), Schneider was seen as perfection, a unique gem whose gentle and moral beauty must be kept away from evil. And who better than a righteous and reliable mother to ensure the safety of Germany's pristine sweetheart? Magda Schneider herself was aware of her daughter's image and of its implications: 'Why do people jump on Romy so much? Because they feel that there is finally a creature who has not came into contact with the *filth* of the world' (*Der Spiegel*, 07/03/1956, pp. 31-41, my emphasis).

Magda's protective role was further reinforced by her image of the happy mother, pleased with her daughter's success ('A mother's heart surrendered', *Film Revue***,** 26/05/1956). As her daughter grew up, Magda continued to exist in media as the voice of reason and wisdom: more than ever they were a team, elaborating strategies for Romy's future international career.[16] She also kept an eye on her daughter's suitors and when Romy began to date actor Horst Buchholz, whose image was that of the rebel who speaks his mind even if it 'displeases those dear adults' (Schneider and Seydel, 1989, p. 111),

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[15] Geiselgasteig is a Grünwald's district (Munich) where are located the Bavaria Films studios.

[16] Magda Schneider's managerial duties probably did more wrong than right for Schneider's career at the time: 'they' (i.e. Magda) refused an offer to work with Luis Buñuel, a three-year contract with Paramount, and a role in a play produced by the Burgtheater (Schneider and Seydel, 1989, p. 96). Magda's argument was that her daughter was 'not ready yet', that she lacked experience, but the truth probably lies somewhere in the following: if Romy had left their lucrative mother-daughter duo, Magda would have lost much more than Romy, on both professional and career levels, which she ultimately did when her daughter move to France in 1958.

Magda intervened as the projection of their romance (although favoured by the press) did not fit her daughter's portrayal of a proper upper middle-class young woman. Indeed, once Schneider's image was newly defined by the concept of virginity, the next logical step in the traditional family social paradigm was marriage. Soon, the young virgin was called 'the little fiancée of Europe' (*Festival*, 01/09/1958), which definitely attests Schneider's European star status, and indicates that a woman's value (a star is no exception) is based on her marital and maternal status: the appellation asserts the image that Schneider was open to marriage. Schneider was at the mercy of whoever in media decided she was 'meant to be with': more than an individual, she was part of a tandem. In a clichéd attempt to relive fictional love in real life (and in a typical star formation trait), media paired her with her *Sissi* trilogy's partner Karlheinz Böhm, and Horst Buchholz, her partner in *Robinson soll nicht sterben* (Josef von Báky, 1957) and *Monpti* (Helmut Käutner, 1957). With the former, the ideal matrimonial fantasy was complete as echoing the screen couple (in fact, Böhm was married and father of a baby girl); with the latter, the (mostly German-speaking) journalistic discourse reported with excitement the attraction of two opposites and the 'forbidden love' dimension that it brought. On the one hand, Buchholz with his 'Halbstarke' image (a bad boy, a yob) presented the possibility to soil the sweet princess, she on the other hand, as the feminine innocence, could 'tame' and 'domesticate' him with the perspective of home and family (*Bravo*, 30/12/1956, cover; Sigl, Schneider, and Tornow, 1986, pp. 130-131; Poiger, 2000, pp. 122-123). But the first romance that confirmed Schneider's sexualisation was with Alpine ski champion Toni Sailer: whether their love story cannot be ascertained, what matters is the illustration that Schneider was considered 'bad juju' for the athlete's professional life (Schneider and Seydel, 1989, p. 106). The star was now allocated with sexual power: she lured him into cocktail receptions where she distracted him with her eroticised body.

Romy Schneider's sexuality was not outspoken nor staged; it was certainly at the core of her star image at the time but its popular appeal was its quiet and discreet nature. While other major stars of the 1950s like Marilyn Monroe, Brigitte Bardot, Jane Mansfield or Sophia Loren were celebrating sex in a more open manner – i.e. it was more obviously apparent in the way they presented their either slim, curvy or busty bodies, which made their sexuality one of the most important component of their respective star images –, Schneider promoted the traditional value of marriage, she was the last refuge against the looming sexual revolution. Whereas Bardot's image was modern (she was the young iconoclast woman of the time) and her films were almost all set in contemporary

times, Schneider, starring essentially in historical films and often presented in the press in costumes, developed an out of touch persona. Her erotic yet outdated image suggested the future wonders of discovering adulthood (marriage, sex, parenting) on a controlled and quiet tone. With the *Sissi* films Schneider's star image managed to fuse innocence with sexuality, only a carefully designed and regulated one (*Cinémonde* called her 'the new muse of modern romanticism', 21/11/1957).

The comparison to Bardot is here a case in point considering the French star also played a young girl (for example in *Cette sacrée gamine*, Michel Boisrond, 1955) whereas other popular actresses, including those of similar age (such as Sophia Loren) played more mature women. At first, at the release of *Sissi 1* in France in March 1957, French magazine *Cinémonde* labelled Schneider the 'German Brigitte Bardot' (*Der Spiegel*, 07/03/1956, p. 35; Krenn, 2013a, p. 76; Vincendeau, 2015b, p. 96). The comparison reflects the magnitude of their popularity and their similar star image at the time in one respect, that of playing the gamine and the charming adolescent. This media comparison occurred right before the release of *Et Dieu… créa la femme* (Roger Vadim, 1956), the film that saw Bardot's superstar status 'upgraded' from gamine to sex goddess (Vincendeau, 2000b, p. 93), and that has to be considered a breaking point: while Bardot merged the 'mature sexual woman' and the gamine in the sex kitten image (p. 93), Schneider remained the 'real young girl' (*Ciné Revue*, 21/12/1956, cover; *Cinémonde*, 21/11/1957; *Nous Deux Film*, 01/09/1958). In 1958, *Le Monde* announced that 'Romy Schneider is exactly the anti-B.B. [Brigitte Bardot]. She only awakens in us notions of purity, tenderness, chaste engagement' (Jean de Baroncelli quoted in Welter, 2008).

This comparison is illustrative of two archetypes of women, with different aspirations, in mid-1950s Europe: one was the infantilised woman, whose rightful role and place was at home with her children, and the other was the sexually iconoclastic woman, representative of a new generation that was pulling against that very role. If Bardot was the face of a 'new' femininity in 1950s France (the semblance of liberation, a modernity mostly confined to sexuality), Schneider's femininity was defined by the notion of potentiality within the bounds of propriety. Her sexuality was the one of a bride-to-be: it was the promise, the possibility of sex (of first time sex) that turned the star from child to prudish maiden and finally eroticised woman. Like Bardot, Schneider's sexuality finds its roots in the natural, although their interpretations diverged. I would argue that Bardot's 'natural type of sexuality' (in opposition to Hollywood 'high glamour', Vincendeau, 2000b, pp. 92-93), was not connoted as simplicity to the extent it was for

Schneider's. Schneider's sexuality was notably defined by the natural and healthy qualities of Sissi's personality, her joie de vivre (she enjoys sports and protects animals). This is well-illustrated by a performance style (see below) that essentially draws on Schneider's projection of authenticity and natural charm.[17] The two young women's sexualities differ as Schneider's on-screen persona was candid, outgoing and accessible, which forged the enticing prospect for young men to *have* her (or at least her hand in marriage), and for young women to *be* like her. This could explain women's interest in Schneider: contrary to some women who were jealous of Bardot and considered the French star a threat (Vincendeau, 2000b, pp. 96-97), Schneider's wife-potential image represented the 'fulfilment of conventional maturity' (Meyer Spacks, 1982, p. 295) and offered a clear example to follow. Schneider's fairy-tale narrative made thousands of girls identify with her to accomplish what they considered their coming-of-age, that is finding their so-called independence and their 'sexual fulfilment as loved one and mother' in the arms of their husband (de Beauvoir, 1949, p. 352).

3. Mise-en-scène: performance and costumes

3.1. Schneider's performance style in the Sissi*s*

After considering the development of both Sissi's arc and Schneider's star image (their coming-of-age and expression of sexuality), I will now explore how the actress's acting has evolved and contributed to create a character with such resonance. Although Schneider's performance as Sissi remained within familiar territory for the actress and German-speaking audiences in the first film, it leant towards new acting registers in *Sissi 2* and *3* in which her depiction of the young Empress is both tragic and erotic. The star began to develop a repertoire of gestures and melodramatic idiosyncrasies that would become part of her performance signature. I will focus on four performance signs to illustrate this evolution: first her physique (body movements and gait), then her face (especially how she moves her chin), third her tone (voice, accent, laugh), and finally her sensual and steady gaze.

[17] Schneider's sexuality was imbricated with the 'healthy' and the 'natural' in a similar manner to Ingrid Bergman's (Wood, 1989, pp. 303-335). Robin Wood argues that society's healthy outlook regarding nature connected with Bergman's natural beauty (attained through photographs of the star without makeup in a lifelike setting, such as an image of her with baby ducks, very similar to Schneider at the beginning of her career), which revealed a sexuality embedded in innocence.

In the beginning of *Sissi I* Schneider plays the Bavarian Princess with exhilaration. Despite imposing costumes, the actress appears at ease in her movements: her step is light, quick, even fluttering, she waves her hat, she squats to play on the floor with her little sister, to feed the fawn or to look into a trunk, she escapes through a window and climbs a roof, she passes under a fence, and she runs. Her activities are athletic: she rides horses, hunts, and hikes while her mother and Nene stay inside and embroider. Schneider's moving body evokes an energetic and uninhibited character, and therefore her body occupies a significant amount of space. The sequence of the family meeting in Ischl between Ludovika, her two daughters, and Sophie and her son Carl-Ludwig (Peter Weck) is a great example of Schneider's performance of the young Sissi as her movements contrast with the other actors', especially Uta Franz who plays Nene. Franz is calmer and more collected than Schneider who is all over the place. She enters the frame, quickly walks towards the group, her right arms extended in anticipation of her curtsey (fig. 2). This allows me to briefly focus on her gait. Because Elisabeth is her most sporting character so far, Schneider's walk becomes evident and contributes to the 'perfect fit'[18] between the character and the actress (Dyer, 1998, p. 129). Schneider's gait (straight back and pulled-back shoulders) can be considered athletic because of the position of her arms: she walks with her elbows turned outward and swings her arms in a manner that is determined and assured. Opposite her, Franz keeps her hands and arms close to her body and barely talks. Also, when Schneider delivers her lines, and despite the weight of her wig (5,5 lb), she positions her head and chest forward, inducing movements to her upper-body and hair. Noticing Carl-Ludwig for example, she waves at him in a cavalier manner (fig. 2), initiating a movement forward, which is immediately reprimanded by her mother who puts a hand on her arm. Ignoring her, she walks towards him, crossing the frame, turns to face him and then walks out of the frame with him. These gestures make Schneider forcefully 'present' in the scene, her performance style apparently unstudied, natural. She performs an energetic girl and her moving body naturally expresses her character's enthusiasm (it leans forward). Franz's composure and stillness signify that her character knows her place in the family hierarchy, Nene fulfils everyone's expectations (she is well-educated), while Sissi is still a disorderly 'kind' (a child), as the matriarchs put it.

[18] Richard Dyer defines the perfect fit as the way in which 'all the aspects of a star's image fit with all the traits of a character' (1998, p. 129).

Fig. 2. Schneider's distinctive gait and body movements in *Sissi 1*.

Sissi's coming-of-age by the end of *Sissi 1* is noticeable in Schneider's growing body (she was 19 in the last film, and became an object of desire in part because of her physique). Once the Princess falls in love with the Emperor and realises that her rightful place is at his side and not gambolling around in the woods, the actress adopts a more serious and composed interpretation that will continue to develop in *Sissi 2* and *3*. If Schneider's performance style is the one of the body in movement in *Sissi 1*, immobility best characterises her acting in the next two films. Schneider adopts court mannerism: her immobile and straight posture, often with her hands crossed in front of her, plays a significant role in her depiction of the dignified Empress, her composure carries an imposing and collected presence, making her character grow more confident and regal. The rare exceptions are a few scenes in which Schneider acts out of this newly contrived character, 'on edge' and reprises her performance of the passionate Sissi expressing her feelings (see below). The actress's straight posture is probably the result of her short stature: one could assume that she has to stand up as tall and straight as she could, which brings me to my analysis of Schneider's second and instrumental performance sign: her face.

Schneider's stature (she was 5ft 3) created a recurrent acting movement that took part in her sex-appeal's construction: not only did she carry her head with pride and distinction, she also had to lift her chin to look up to her partner, which sometimes she used for seductive purpose (she 'offered' her face, as if to receive a kiss; see fig. 3). This distinctive performance sign was increasingly used by Marischka and cinematographer Bruno Mondi, especially in *Sissi 3* where Schneider was frequently filmed in profile or from an oblique angle. This lengthened her neck and enhanced her square jawline, making the movement of her head appear more delicate and sensual. The latter is particularly emphasised when she laughs: she erotically throws her head back, closes her eyes and laughs uproariously (fig. 4).

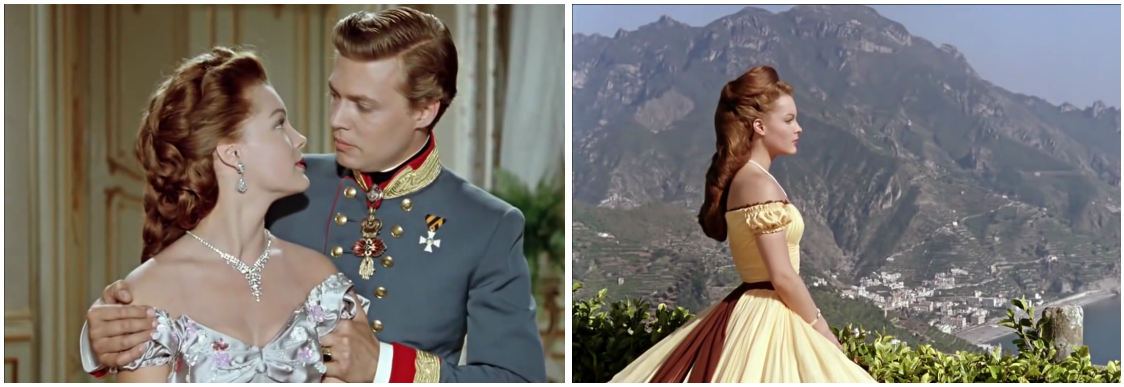

Fig. 3. Schneider's square jawline in *Sissi 2* in 1956 (left), and in *Sissi 3* in 1957 (right).

Fig. 4. Schneider's erotic laugh in *Sissi 3*.

Schneider's laugh leads me to analyse briefly a third performance sign: her change of tone. In *Sissi 1* she smiled and laughed, she talked in a girlish voice, with a cheerful, uneven tone. Schneider's first transitional phase towards womanhood remained in the

domain of cuteness and for a brief moment she developed a gamine persona. This was emphasised by her comic performance in *Sissi 1*, which evolved around a mischief register: it was her character's playfulness and repartee that made her appealing. But she abandoned her smiles to, first, a range of childish, pouting faces (signalling her character's disapproval of change). Schneider developed a more mature tone for Sissi the woman. Her voice and accent in German are softer and a bit more melodic than a high German accent, which makes her sound sweeter than she probably would have otherwise. Her vocabulary and grammar were elaborate for Sissi and she employed sophisticated phrase, according to her character's high noble rank. She laughed less and displayed a certain pose and affectation – still candid, but less demure.

From this exploration of Schneider's performing body, face, and speech, we can see that their development accompanied the trilogy's narrative shift towards dramatic tonalities. Owing to her performance of the disparaged mother and of the suffering body (in *Sissi 3*), the actress's sensual aesthetics became attached to signs of tragic and melodramatic mannerism. To illustrate this evolution, I will analyse two scenes in which Schneider combined and worked these three signs. The first one is the moment Sissi discovers that her child has been removed from her care and she confronts her husband and mother-in-law. Schneider bustles about, looking nervously around the nursery for the cradle, shaking her head and losing her nerve. The movements of Schneider's hair (braids and long curls sweeping her shoulders) that I have previously mentioned were induced by quick and sharp head turns, a performance sign that Schneider retained during her entire career and became, from her Sissi performance onwards, the bearer of a melodramatic, even histrionic tone. Schneider flared her nostrils, talked vividly and sharply, in contrast to the Emperor whose speech tone and pace remain composed and firm, asserting his masculine, paternal and royal superiority. Schneider hastily leaves the scene with her signature walk, determined and angry.

During the scene in which Sissi overhears news of her health condition, Schneider does not speak and all the predicaments and conflicted feelings that her character experiences are translated and heightened by the many expressions of her face captured in close-up. Because Sissi has to remain quiet, hidden in the half-open door, Schneider's acting is both subtly tragic and melodramatically excessive, therefore very efficient in confronting and connecting with the spectator's empathy. Due to minimal and whitish makeup, her face is pallid, her nude lips livid. Although the character was meant to appear ill, the star had to remain beautiful: there are no bags under Schneider's eyes and they are

brightened with a trait of beige eyeliner above the lashes of the lower lid, drawing attention to the intensity of her soundless performance. She first looks intrigued, then haggard, leaning her head against the wall, and desperate and shocked, widening her eyes and opening her mouth in a silent scream, inaudibly smashing the wall to finally burying her head in her hands (fig. 5).

Fig. 5. Schneider's silent and yet high-flown sentiments in *Sissi 3*.

Finally, the fourth recognisable sign of Schneider's acting repertoire developed over the *Sissi* trilogy is her enticing 'œillade'. Although it was used sporadically during that period, this sidelong and frolicsome glance carried a sexual knowingness, the hint that she was aware of the power that a single teasing look can have on her interlocutors. Sissi's charm is known to be 'irresistible', and she used it to coax men gently; in this, Schneider's calculating gaze, its insistence and shrewdness, played an important part and she used it more often as she was coming of age. Let's consider the scene between Sissi and her husband in a roadside inn. In this conversation between two long-distanced lovers who meet after a long time apart, Sissi has to soothe Franz Joseph, jealous of Andrássy and the time she spent in Hungary, for which Schneider had recourse to her 'œillade'. Once she has succeeded (he suggests a romantic escapade in Ischl), Schneider concludes her seduction performance with a sigh of relief, closes her eyes and leans towards him, putting her cheek against his, caressing it, smiling and erotically opening her mouth (fig.

6). This scene illustrates an important change in Schneider's persona: she acts a woman who purposely seduces.

Fig. 6. An early sign of the seductive Schneider: her 'œillade' in *Sissi 3*.

My analysis shows that Sissi's appeal was in great part related to Schneider's naturalistic and spontaneous performance style that suggested authenticity. She was perceived as projecting herself into the character and, physically growing-up, she carried Sissi within her coming-of-age. This sense of authenticity goes towards explaining her success: the young Schneider performed herself and perfectly fit the ingénue Sissi, a winsome, smiling woman whose charm remained within the limits of propriety while instilling sexual tension and a masculine desire that could never be fulfilled. Schneider's sensual acting signs remained timid; they were there nonetheless, asserting the star image of a seductive and distinguished woman, a transformation also visible through costumes as the following section will show.

3.2. An Iconographic transition: Schneider's costumes from Princess to Empress

As previsouly mentioned, historical costume film was very popular in 1950s western Europe, and costumes themselves were part of the pleasure for spectators. Alongside the films' coming-of-age narrative and the star's acting repertoire, the third way Romy Schneider was 'equipped' to cross over the German-speaking borders was her appeal to European popular memory through the transition she makes iconographically via

costumes. As the trilogy unfolded, an increasing number of glamorous ball gowns promoted the image of an alluring young star and reinforced her princess persona that resonated with European collective memory. In this section I want to discuss how Sissi's costumes contributed to Schneider's performance. First, I will focus on their design in regard to their adaptation to historical reality (their authenticity), to 1950s fashion, and to Schneider's physique. Then, like the actress's performance signs partook in the character's arc, I will consider how costumes translated her narrative development.

Sissi's costumes have first to be explored regarding their degree of authenticity (Cook, 1996, p. 64; Hayward, 2010, pp. 38, 60-62). Designers Gerdago (Gerda Gottstein, who worked on the three films), Franz Szivats (*Sissi 1*), and Leo Bei (*Sissi 2* and *Sissi 3*) made sure that their creations shared similarities to their historical models, further embedding Schneider's image of the fairy-tale princess into historical reality. The dresses were loosely inspired by European royal fashion from the mid-19th century and by some of Elisabeth of Austria's own ball gowns. The term 'ball' is important: there was a distinction between the Empress's daily attire and her more elaborate ball gowns for special occasions, official appearances and ceremonies. Costume designers deliberately chose the latter, a more glamorous-connoted option for Schneider's dresses, a couple of them directly quoting Elisabeth's most iconic representations. The design of the Empress's imposing gowns was particularly complicated and cluttered: in her full-length official portrait by Winterhalter (fig. 7) she wears a creation (by Charles Frederic Worth) made of an accumulation of fluffy petticoats and tulle sewn with diamonds stars (matching the ones in her hair), and completed with a shawl. For her coronation as Queen of Hungary, she wore a silver brocade gown trimmed with lace and a midnight blue velvet bodice with pearl lacing. These dresses were already known throughout Europe in the 1950s: the reproduction of portraits and photographs of Empress Elisabeth had helped cement her popularity during the second half of 19th century (as did her many travels across European continent and seas) and the 20th century with a proliferation of biographies[19]. Such representations inspired the trilogy's iconography, creating an inter-generational connection between the historical figure and her 1950s fictional embodiment: from the authentic bouffant ball gowns, Schneider's costumes kept some

[19] One of the most 'enthusiastically welcomed' Elisabeth's biographies was Egon Caesar Conte Corti's 1934 book *Elisabeth, die seltsame Frau* (*Elisabeth, Empress of Austria*), edited many times, translated in several languages and regularly reprinted (Schraut, 2011, p. 161-162).

elements, although the choice for a more subdued style was evident. Designers respected the width of the skirts, and some of the colours (mostly whites, midnight blue, Venitian red, and bottle green) wore by the Empress before she observed a mourning wardrobe. But the overall design in the films was much simpler and more delicate, especially the upper body parts where the historical swollen sleeves adorned with curlicues were replaced by tiny, ruffled, and off-the-shoulders sleeves. Yet, some costumes were imitating the historical attires, such as Sissi's engagement and wedding dresses that were to become central in Schneider's 'Europe's little fiancée' image (see above). Many magazine covers pictured the star wearing the engagement attire (figuring the Empress's diamond stars in her hair), itself inspired by Winterhalter's portrait replicated to the exact pose by Schneider in studio stills and posters (fig. 7), and the wedding dress with taglines such as 'I too want my wedding gown' (*Deutsche Illustrierte*, 28/01/1956, cover; see fig.8), reinforcing her ideal wife-potential image. Schneider's various dresses gave the sense of a historical look, yet is also fit in 1950s aesthetics.

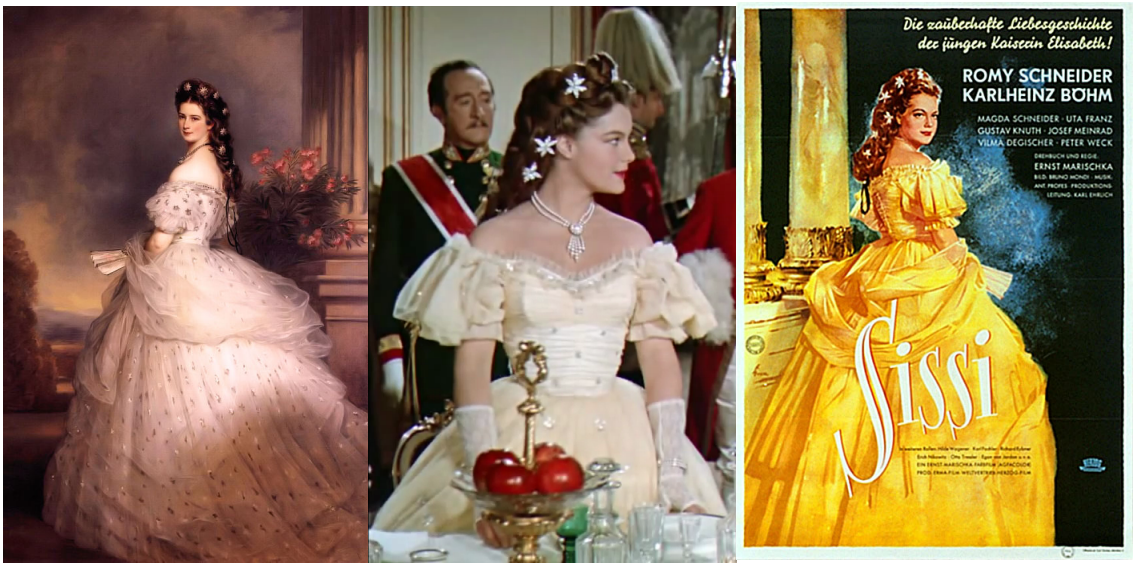

Fig. 7. Left: Franz Xaver Winterhalter, *Elisabeth of Bavaria, Empress of Austria*, 1865 (Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna). Centre: Romy Schneider wearing similar attire at the end of *Sissi 1*. Right: The original Austrian poster of *Sissi*.

Fig. 8. Left: Romy Schneider wearing her engagement dress on the cover of *Ciné Révélation*, March 1956. Right: Schneider in her wedding gown from *Sissi 1* on the cover of *Deutsche Illustrierte* (28/01/1956).

Equally significant to their historical references were the costumes' adaptations to 1950s fashion, especially the New Look's hyper-feminine silhouette. Aptly, the New Look itself drew inspiration from the romantic 'princess gown' style from Second Empire France (the same era of Elisabeth of Austria). Couture designers such as Charles James and Christian Dior created strict hour-glass flower shapes with wasp-waisted bodices and extravagant use of fabric for long, crinoline-like skirts. The New Look aimed to revive fantasy, luxury, and the classical iconography of 'eternal beauty' after the privations of World War II (Steele, 1997, pp. 13-15; Hayward, 2010, p. 277), which was precisely the effect of Schneider's ball gowns that feature a form fitting bodice, a discrete emphasis on the shoulders with their dropping and short sleeves, and a full skirt as well. Schneider's costumes went so far as to introduce fashionable 1950s colours such as soft pastels (baby pink, aquamarine, light blue, orange and purple), and pattern and accessories like polka dots, white long gloves, pearl necklaces, and wide-brimmed saucer hats. The lush ball dress of the title character in Walt Disney's animation film *Cinderella* (Clyde Geronimi, Wilfred Jackson, Hamilton Luske, 1950) already made the synthesis of the historical princess style of the second-half of the 19th century with the New Look just a couple of years before the *Sissi*s, and shares striking resemblance with Schneider's costumes (fig. 9). The wide cut of the dress, the small sleeves, and the long gloves were reprised in most

of Schneider's gowns. These might be direct quotes as *Cinderella* came out in West Germany in December 1951 and in Austria a year later. Although *Cinderella* does not appear in Garncarz's Top Ten list for the year 1951-1952 in West Germany[20] (1994, p. 124), its 13 million spectators in French cinemas (it was the second highest success [Simsi, 2012, p. 15]) confirms the ongoing popularity of fairy-tale narratives. The film was even re-released in France in 1958, the same year *Sissi 3* and *Christine* (starring Schneider) came out, and in West Germany in 1960 at the Berlin Film Festival. Cinderella is still the princess figure par excellence, its success is bounded to a specific narrative moment (the makeover, see later), and a particular body type. Indeed, Schneider's physique also participated in the popularity of her image in costumes.

Fig. 9. Left: The 'Venus' gown created by Christian Dior, autumn/winter 1949-50 (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York). Centre: Some fashionable 1950s details were quoted into Sissi's costumes (*Sissi 3*). Right: Cinderella's fairy-tale dress (*Cinderella*, 1950).

The memorable visual spectacle of Schneider in her princess dress makes clear that costumes were also adapted to her physique. Enhancing her bodily transformation, they were central to the visualisation of her coming-of-age. The star turned 18 and 19 over the filming of the trilogy, she was slim, with a small chest, and therefore departed from the fashionable fuller and curvy figure of the 1830s (sloping shoulders, rounded

[20] At the time 'German-made film were more popular than American films', US films took over German film market in the 1970s (Garncarz, 1994, p. 95).

bust, narrow waist and full hips).[21] As previously said, the upper body parts of Schneider's dresses differed from their historical references, in that they emphasised and flattered her feminine features. With a simple and form-fitting design, short sleeves, and low-cut neckline, they drew the eye to the actress's juvenile aspect. We saw that it was conventionally required of Schneider to perform the fresh maiden as well as the glamorous fiancée, and therefore to induce male desire without appearing too ostensibly sexy, and her costumes did exactly so – they discretely eroticised her character. This double standard is illustrated in Schneider's skin exposure: her costumes were designed to express the Empress's dignified status, yet their cut accentuates the shape of her breasts and reveal an important amount of pale skin (neckline, shoulders, arms, hands), a complexion that carries concepts of nobility and refinement (see Dyer, 1997). The full-skirted petticoat gowns made of precious fabrics and adorned with jewels lengthened her silhouette, refined her waist (emphasised by a corset and a V-shaped waistline bodice or a tight belt), and induced a different body posture and movements as seen in previous section on performance (Schneider walked and moved more slowly, stood tall and straight, and the corset, by constraining her breathing, emphasised the breathing movement of her chest). At first, some romantic details (such as discrete floral pattern and tiny pink butterflies and roses on the neckline) persisted on the gowns, but later the emphasis was on the dropping of the trains and the skirts lines (long strips of fabrics such as belts and shawls) to further lengthen the actress's figure. The absence of overwhelming details and ornaments on the dresses or in the hair gave focus on the actress's performance, the movements of long skirts smoothly accompanying her walk and dance, which, combined with her soft voice and thin upper body, suggested an ambivalent image of femininity: growing elegant, graceful, and confident, while also remaining delicate and fragile. How to explain the look's popularity throughout the years? The princess silhouette popularised by Schneider (and Cinderella) might function as an 'iconogramme', a visual landmark, quickly identifiable because monosemic and belonging to a 'shared knowledge' (de la Bretèque, 1998, p. 294). The key is that Schneider's dresses were made of simple figurative traits: simplicity of design and an

[21] In a way, Schneider tended to resemble Elisabeth of Austria herself who was famous for contrasting and outshining the conventional beauty canons of her time with her slenderness, poise, and extreme thinness – it is now common knowledge that she suffered from anorexia and subjected her body to intense exhaustion (see des Cars, 1983; Clément, 1992; Schraut, 2011).

absence of superfluous details (no excessive ruffles, laces, or bows, no additional layers of different fabrics like we see in many historical costume films); this figuration of a shape easily visualised do not overwhelm the viewer's eyes, making it both iconic and familiar.

Like Schneider's performance signs, her costumes also participate to the character's coming-of-age. From the sporty and simple clothing of the girl frolicking in the woods, to the introduction of the fairy-tale princess gown (see below), there is a narrative evolution of Schneider's costumes. In *Sissi 1*, the young girl wears sporty, simply-cut clothes of either warm colours (dark red, brown), or soft pink and midnight blue, adorned with lace pan collar and embroidered details, silk pink scarfs and aprons, neckerchief, and bottle green gloves and felt hat. Nonetheless, her clothing gives away the character's status and already hints at a certain sophistication: hiking dresses are embellished with pearls and velvet details, and her Venitian red riding dress is heavy, with a train that Schneider has to pick up to walk, in a fashion reminiscent of royal female figures' attitudes. Schneider's Bavarian dresses are usually ankle-length and her feet are visible to allow a greater freedom of movement. I have previously reflected on her performance of the girl: her character is full of energy and therefore not yet constricted by costumes, unlike those of the mother and sister whose freedom of movement was restrained by cumbersome clothing. When Schneider wore her Bavarian costumes, she had the opportunity to move her body more freely, as required for her performance of a vivid and enthusiastic girl. Progressively this casual costuming was replaced by sophisticated attire, illustrating both Sissi's coming-of-age and the star's physical growth.

One gown in particular played a fundamental role in this: I call it 'the makeover dress'. As a trope that highlights transitions, the cinematic makeover not only maps out a female protagonist's experience of what Maryn Wilkinson (2015) calls 'becoming woman', but also rectifies the contesting notions of femininity by re-inscribing gender identity through excessive performance (here, the star's spectacularisation in costume). After running away from the mesmerised Emperor who was in the midst of declaring his love, Sissi's true identity is revealed to Franz Joseph as Schneider makes a solemn entrance at his birthday ball. Her apparition is surprising to both the imperial suitor and the spectator who discover Schneider in the splendour of the film's first 'princess panoply'. She wears an aquamarine floor-length gown made of satin and organza, and adorned with three shining stripes of floral trimming on the skirt, the bodice, the low-cut neckline, and the short puffed sleeves that uncover her shoulders; she has bright pink lips,

long curls of hair cascading down her back, and she wears lace white gloves, a sparkling arrow-shaped hair jewel, and a bucket clutch matching her dress. As suggested by the mise-en-scène, the magnificence of the dress and the spectacular effect (fig. 10) of Schneider's apparition was intended by Marischka to create a pivotal and lasting image of the young star. She enters after her mother and sister, at the centre of the frame, and when she appears at the doors (creating a frame within the frame) the music hits pompous brass notes – all enhancing her appearance as iconic. By this makeover act, the unapologetic and free Sissi modifies her barely existent femininity to create a non-threatening one (Bleach, 2010, pp. 29-32). To become a 'true woman' – i.e. a feminine woman –, Sissi had to appear hyper-gendered and Schneider to expose her body, enhanced by her gown. We see Schneider through the eyes of her male partner Böhm: identically reproducing the Prince's reaction in *Cinderella* (reinforcing the trilogy's fairy-tale parentage), Franz Joseph is mesmerised. This was probably the same effect the producers wished the audience would experience too: a man's glorious vision of a delicate young woman. The gaze of the opposite sex validated Schneider's 'worth' inscribed onto her body.

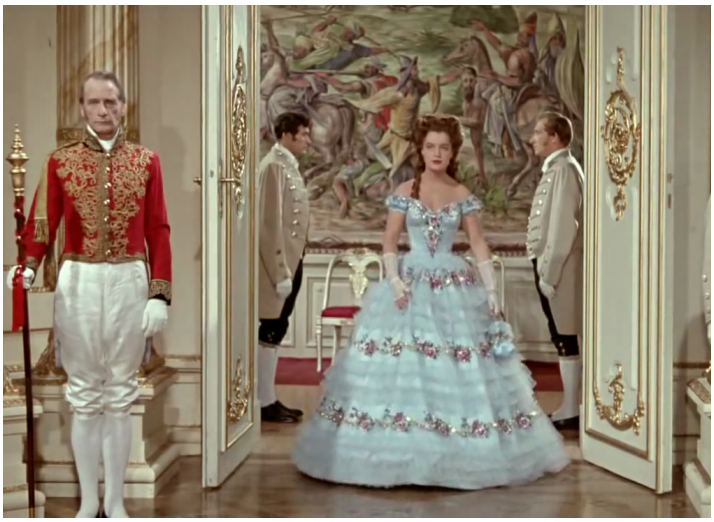

Fig. 10. Schneider's makeover princess dress and pivotal coming-of-age moment (*Sissi 1*).

Conclusion

The perfect fit between Sissi and Schneider was the result of the expert blending of the character with the star's private and screen personas, creating authenticity, charisma, and sense of intimate connection with audiences. It began with a role developed by Marischka for Schneider who was already in tune with the historical imperial figure by virtue of her

romantic princess image, well-established amongst domestic audiences before she embarked on *Sissi 1*. More importantly, Schneider contributed through performance and costume to the creation of the character and she took Elisabeth from youth to sensual maturity. Schneider, as Sissi, was the ever-becoming woman – that is, as much as the narrative and her costumes might have stressed ambiguous, almost hidden sexuality, the star's eyes suggested a more knowledgeable personality and seemed to have some erotic content. Her naturalistic performance, her youthful and growing body, and the absence of theatrical training were all aspects that cultivated the authenticity component of her star image – the sense that she was her spontaneous self in front of the camera. Schneider's royal persona was further reinforced by her on- and off-screen relationship with Magda Schneider, a continuous presence in her daughter's life and a constant reminder to look for the family element: Schneider was the 'crown Princess' of German-speaking cinema and its ideal and prestigious representative in Europe as she herself came from a dynasty of actors on her father side (Schwarzenbach, 2006, p. 312). As a result, the role of Sissi and its impeccable fit with Schneider marked the star so much that no producer dared to derail from this young, fresh and precious screen persona for a while.

Chapter II. Romy after *Sissi*: transition to the 1960s

Introduction

At the age of 19 Romy Schneider had reached trans-European stardom[1] but also also had become inseparable from an image that conveyed the (sexually and racially restrictive) archetype of the ingénue. Her persona was defined to such an extent by the princess role that she faced the difficulties of typecasting and tried to move away from Sissi by changing her image. Although Sissi made Schneider a star in high demand (she made on average three films a year at the time and co-starred with the elite of European cinema) with an important media presence, her career came to a standstill – the films in which she attempted to alter her Sissi-like image were neither box office nor critical successes.

The process of renegotiating her image involved many parties: the star herself and her (documented) wish to expand her repertoire, her mother Magda and stepfather Hans Herbert Blatzheim, producers from different film industries (Austria, West Germany, France), and French and German-speaking audiences. Many details of their respective contribution to the decision-making regarding Romy's career are imprecisely chronicled in Schneider's 'autobiography' *Ich, Romy* (Schneider and Seydel, 1988), a document that I have evoked in the general introduction and that has to be considered with caution, especially since it tends to continue on a dominant discourse established a posteriori and contemptuous vis-à-vis the *Sissi*s.

In this chapter I track down Schneider's character evolution and her unsuccessful endeavour to change it into a more modern, emancipated and sexual woman. The 1956-1959 years are rarely taken into account in the abundant literature on Schneider, a void usually justified in journalistic rhetoric by her films' alleged lack of quality. I consider it nonetheless a crucial time in her trajectory as she continued on her trans-European trajectory by working on European co-productions, which laid the foundations of another line of discourse – her polarised reception by French and German-speaking audiences. This period of transition is complex, with many tensions between different types of film characters. As a result, I structure it into three sections: the continuity with the Sissi figure

[1] In the case of Schneider, and at this particular time of her career, I define trans-European stardom in terms of reception: I have examined in chapter 1 how she was positively received by varied national audiences, even celebrated in many continental European countries for her Sissi character, and how her star image transcended the national Germanic implication of the Empress figure.

and the star's typecasting, the attempt to move away from this cumbersome image, and then a suggestion for a more radical alternative – but with some unavoidable disturbance to strict chronology, as her films did not necessarily follow such neat phases.

1. The weight of the *Sissi* legacy

Schneider's work on the *Sissi* trilogy was interspersed by other film shootings: between *Sissi 1* and *2* she did *Kitty und die große Welt* / *Kitty and the Great Big World* (Alfred Weidenmann, 1956), then between *Sissi 2* and *3* she filmed, amongst others, *Robinson soll nicht sterben* / *The Girl and the Legend* (Josef von Báky, 1957), and finally *Scampolo* (Alfred Weidenmann, 1958) right after completing *Sissi 3*. I chose to briefly examine these three films together with *Ein Engel auf Erden* / *An Angel on Wheels* (Géza von Radványi, 1959) because they all typecast the star as the romantic and demure girl. I will start with her roles in the first two films as they also share other members of cast, and I will then consider *Scampolo* and *Ein Engel auf Erden*, both comedies set in southern Europe. Chapter I developed how the success of the Sissi figure was based on both its star and specific national meanings for German-speaking countries. Schneider's image of the virgin was so deep-seated in Germanic collective memory that it became untouchable in the sense that it should remain preserved from harm, hence audiences' defensive attitude towards any potential change. Heretofore the wholesome Sissi/Romy figure had proved infallible at the box office and it is not surprising that *Kitty, Robinson*, *Scampolo* and *Ein Engel auf Erden* exploited it, making Schneider's purity forefront.

1.1. Familiar faces

As Pamela Robertson Wojcik explains, there is a double view on typecasting (2004, pp. 169-189). On one hand, actors subjected to typecasting resent its limitation and its commercial connotation that entails lack of originality – it threatens to diminish the art of acting and deny them the exploration of their craft. On the other hand, it can provide continuous work in the industry for those who embody national and cultural stereotypes, and it is true that Schneider was very much in demand and worked continuously during those years. Sarah Thomas's study of German star Peter Lorre (2012) is here enlightening in regard to typecasting. She questions the dominant views on Lorre's career by arguing how reductive the concept of an 'image' is and a passive one for the stars themselves (it can dispossess them of any agency as professionals). Thomas points to the decisions made by the stars themselves, and it is in this respect that Schneider's typecasting as the ingénue

appears doubly imposed. The young star had almost no say in her career choices during those years – her mother and stepfather Blatzheim were still managing her career and finances. This continuous parental presence influenced Schneider's typecasting first hand – Blatzheim received and selected the scripts sent to the family home, and forged media discourses as well (see later), which in return contributed to maintain and propagate the national, social and sexually confining stereotype embodied by Schneider, i.e. the bubbly romantic girl, ready to become a housewife.

Indeed, neither in *Kitty* nor in *Robinson* does her role depart from the maiden star image that her previous films and media discourses had built so far. Both films recycle many elements associated with her romantic persona. Let's first consider *Kitty*, a West German romantic comedy photographed in black and white, set in modern-times Geneva, and in which Schneider's character (a beauty salon employee) falls in love with Karlheinz Böhm, her partner in the *Sissi*s. *Kitty* is the remake of the 1939 German comedy *Kitty und die Weltkonferenz* (Helmut Käutner's first film, he also directed *Monpti* with Schneider in 1957); the dissimilarities between the two films are illustrative of the importance of both Schneider's ingénue persona and her typecasting. While the original Kitty (Hannelore Schroth) is more conniving and involved in a political intrigue (Geneva hosts an international conference and she charms the British Minister of Economic Affairs), Romy's Kitty has no agency. She meets the statesman (Otto Eduard Hasse in the 1956 version) in a street by chance, they bond over a lost pup (the actress is photographed cuddling a pet, a recurring sign attached to sweetness and innocence), and when she becomes a prey to the tabloids the politician sends his nephew Robert (Böhm) to protect her, and the young people fall for each other. The key here is that, exactly as in *Sissi 1*, Romy's character does not *purposely* seduce men; seduction is, for her, an 'accidental' outcome of her charming personality. Also, the reunion of the stars from the previous year's most successful film in Austria and West Germany was obviously considered a safe bet for the producers. The fairy-tale element is personified by Böhm whom actions in *Kitty* directly recall *Sissi 1*: they take refuge in the sunny countryside in a reference to the meeting between Sissi and the Emperor, they enjoy a stroll by the banks of Lake Geneva, eat cheese fondue (there is a similar scene in a Tyrol inn in *Sissi 2* in which the incognito imperial couple eat an omelette), and he carries her in his arms to cross a creek.

The *Sissi*-induced fairy-tale element, at the core of Romy's popularity, is also present in *Robinson* as well as other familiar faces – Magda Schneider and Gustav Knuth, gentle Duke Max (Sissi's father) is now a manipulative pirate in von Báky's drama. In

this costume film, which came out in West Germany a couple of months after *Sissi 2*, Magda reprised the mother role of her daughter's character, Maud. Romy inhabits for the first time a proletarian milieu (a spinning cotton factory in 1730 London) at the opposite of the lavish décors of the Vienna court, she is dressed in rags and wears her hair parted in two short and messy plaits – the image could not be more far-off from her pristine and glorious looks in *Sissi 1* and *2*. And yet her role is still that of the sweet, obliging and good girl. In *Robinson* and *Kitty* Schneider continues to personify warmth, altruism and innocence. Her first steps out of Sissi's shoes appeared therefore supervised by both her real-life and fictional parents, and resolutely turned towards the past. It continued to be so after the completion of the trilogy.

1.2. Different settings, same girl

Scampolo, set in modern-times Ischia Island (Italy), was Schneider's first film after *Sissi 3*. She portrays the resourceful, fun-loving and vivid title character who comes to the help of the ambitious but penniless architect Costa. Her simple summer clothes (a loose red cotton skirt and a white blouse with short sleeves) and shoulder-length, untidy brunette hair fit with her performance of the flitting, outspoken (sometimes passionate, as seen in *Sissi 3*) Scampolo. She charms men and women with her genuine smile to help out someone in need, exactly like her role of Elisabeth of Austria. The film's sunny Ischia-location recalls its contemporary *Et Dieu… créa la femme* (Vadim, 1956) set on the Riviera and Saint-Tropez, all fashionable places on the Mediterranean coast, which grant them a modern cachet. Yet, *Scampolo*'s glimpse of modernity strikes a more parodic, amiable note as it is not translated into Schneider's visual representation that remains traditional, especially in comparison to Bardot. While both stars play on the tension between the wild child and the woman, their difference of interpretation is glaring: Bardot exudes sexiness, Schneider is still a girl. The age-gap might have a part in this (Bardot was 22 years old in *Et Dieu… créa la femme*, Schneider was 19 in *Scampolo*), but their appearances, costumes and hairstyles are opposed, denoting the distance between two concurrent visual representations of femininity in 1950s Europe. When Bardot undulates, strikes pin-up poses and wears form-fitting clothes revealing her lithe body, Schneider hops and skips and wears loose skirt and shirt (although she visibly does not wear a bra). Schneider's costumes and performance show the character's modesty. She changes her summer attire only twice, and the reference to Sissi's free spirit is patent. First, for a dinner with Costa, she wears a cotton lilac boat-necked dress with white heels; then, at a

party, she wears a white and delicate lace dress offered, in fairy-tale-like fashion, by her suitor. On both occasions, Schneider makes her character uncomfortable with these new attires that do not match Scampolo's nature-loving and wild personality: she tightens her lips (Scampolo is uncomfortable wearing her first pair of pantyhose), she stumbles and sticks her heel in the paving, and takes off her shoes to dance with a guest (in comparison, Bardot's torrid mambo displays sexuality through the star's lascivious dance moves); and she keeps trying to hide her décolleté with her hand. Both Bardot and Schneider convey spontaneity, youth, femininity and naturalness, but in opposing ways ('Brigitte Bardot and Romy Schneider, it's night and day', *Radio Télé Ciné*, 11/01/1959).

Two years later, in spring 1959, Schneider shot *Ein Engel auf Erden* on the French Riviera. Hitherto Schneider's trans-European stardom has been defined in terms of reception; progressively it began to include co-productions too, setting the terrain for her 1960s international career. *Ein Engel auf Erden* could be considered her second French film after *Christine* (analysed later) – expect for Schneider (who lived in France at the time), the cast and crew were French, the capital was French-German, and the script was co-written by French writer René Barjavel and Hungarian Géza von Radványi who also directed. Schneider plays a double role in the film: the guardian angel of a dashing racing driver Pierre (Henri Vidal), and Line, the stewardess desperately in love with him, of whom the angel has taken the body form in the hope of bringing them together. The film is filled with references to Schneider's generic ingénue characterisation: the actress wears short blonde hair like a halo and a demure blue uniform, and she is filmed cuddling white doves; her character, who is literally an angel, advocates virtuous coupledom with a 'pure and sweet soul'. On the opposite side of the femininity spectrum is Pierre's brunette and temptress fiancée (Michèle Mercier) whom Schneider calls 'the devil' because she experiences the pleasures of sex. I close this section on Schneider's typecasting with a telling illustration. In a scene that features Pierre and his friend (Jean-Paul Belmondo) drunk, they share the vision (translated through point of view shots) of a Schneider-look-alike mannequin (it has her facial features, blonde hair and stewardess costume) stripped down of its skirt and vest to reveal white lingerie (full-cup bra, panties, garter and nylon pantyhose). What should have been the actress's body is replaced by an effigy – a frozen, unalterable version of her. The scene's surrealist and comical tone is a humorous reference to the impossibility to modify Schneider's star persona: undressing her on camera was unconceivable at the time (although, as we shall see, it did happen on rare occasions), and here she remained literally untouchable. In spite of the playful and self-

reflexive allusion to its star's typecasting, *Ein Engel auf Erden* fully embraces Schneider's ingénue character, denying this second-degree humour to the Angel/Line who remains innocent. The film was directed by Géza von Radványi, who also made *Girls in Uniform* the year before. The latter film illustrates Schneider's decision to take on bolder roles in an effort to alter her image.

2. Trying to leave the ingénue behind

Much has been written and featured in countless documentaries on the ways Schneider tried to 'escape' Sissi. It is probably the aspect of her life and career that dominates media the most in the contemporary reception of the star. As we shall shortly see, the event that marked considerable change for Schneider's image was her relocation from Cologne where she lived with her family, to Paris where she moved in with her new companion Alain Delon. Focussing on the Austrian-French couple is also usually how media, then and now, frame this period. Yet, a couple of years before this rupture in her private and public life the star had already tried to expand and diversify her image, mainly by accepting more dramatic and bolder roles. Because I consider Anne-Claire in *Monpti* (Helmut Käutner, 1957) to be the first of them, as well as the best illustration of the conflicts inherent to Schneider's ingénue persona, I will dwell on it before proceeding with her work on 'daring' characters and the more erotically explicit presentation of her body in *Mädchen in Uniform* / *Girls in Uniform* (Géza von Radványi, 1958), *Die Halbzarte* / *Eva* (Rolf Thiele, 1959), *Die schöne Lügnerin* / *The Beautiful Liar* (Axel von Ambesser, 1959), and finally *Katia* / *Adorable Sinner* (Robert Siodmak, 1959).

2.1. Monpti

In this tragicomic love story set in 1950s Paris, Schneider is the 17-year-old Anne-Claire who falls for Horst Buchholz's character (another familiar face due to their collaboration in *Robinson* the previous year), a penniless Hungarian artist whom she calls 'my little one' ('mon p'tit' in French, hence the title). Schneider still performs the sweet girl but she is less naïve than in *Sissi 1*, *Kitty* and *Robinson*, a slight change of character related to the question of sex, following her coming-of-age charted in *Sissi 2*. With *Monpti* appeared a new dichotomy between romantic ingénue and sexy young woman that informed Schneider's career and persona during the years 1956-1959. Prima facie Anne-Claire is another of Schneider's many girl roles who tell white lies (like in *Wenn der weiße Flieder wieder blüht*, *Mädchenjahre einer Königin*, and *Sissi 1*; here she hides her

precarious situation to Monpti and pretends to have a wealthy family), and wishes to marry. The desire to become a wife remained in line with Schneider's maiden figure: it drives her characters and/or closes their arcs, and it was a constant reminder of Schneider's social role model in post-war Europe – the personification of marriage, home and family unity. Yet, the role was problematic for her ingénue image for the main conflict of the film is Anne-Claire's inner uncertainty as to whether she should yield to her urge to love physically. The FSK[2] (the regulatory organisation of the German film industry) demanded cuts and amendments. In its justifications it invoked Anne-Claire's 'chastity game' (her 'fluctuating attitude between self-preservation and pre-emptive surrender'), and the tendency for 16-17-year-old girls to 'identify with the main actress'. Contrary to Sissi that was celebrated for her demure attitude towards marriage and sexuality, Schneider's role as Anne-Claire and her 'willingness to pre-marital surrender' was more than discouraged, it represented a 'risk'[3]. This discussion over morality illuminates the contradictions prevailing in the late 1950s: traditional opinions and modern attitudes towards premature sexuality circulated concurrently (Wierling, 1994; Hake, 2008, pp. 112, 115; Fenemore, 2009, pp. 770-773). I will now illustrate how Schneider's presentation and performance in *Monpti* demonstrated this ambivalence, balancing between the virgin and the sexy young woman.

In chapter 1, I exposed the evolution of Schneider's physical appearance and acting style, as they were taking a more feminine turn, and *Monpti* follows this line. First, let's consider her looks. The voice-over narrator, setting the characters, makes a comparison between Schneider and another woman, rejecting the latter because of her mature look (a busty brunette); more credible for his 'typical love story' is the thin and blonde Schneider wearing soft pink colours (a sleeveless blouse with a Peter pan collar, Capri pants, and a neckerchief), white gloves, a little white hand-basket, her hair up in a ponytail, and carrying 'a book under her arm' – the generic depiction of the feminine, demure and modest girl, a priori not concerned with sex. To stress even more Schneider's purity and nobility, she is framed in her next shot looking with envy and wonder (she smiles, her hands crossed over her chest) at a married couple on the forecourt of Notre-Dame.

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[2] Freiwillige Selbstkontrolle der Filmwirtschaft.

[3] Minutes of the FSK main committee, procedure 15.069, portfolio *Monpti*, Archives of the Deutsche Kinemathek (Berlin).

Although Schneider's facial features and performance might appear more mature (she is photographed in profile, which emphasises her jawline, and she sometimes uses her imperious speech tone when Anne-Claire acts arrogant), the film's overall tone insists on the girlish, almost childlike nature of her character that appealed to audiences in *Sissi 1*. For example, Anne-Claire is afraid of thunder and snuggles in Monpti's arms, Schneider's voice is still high-pitched and soft, and when she cries she excessively lower her head like a little girl who has done something bad. The actress was therefore balancing between poles apart: she performed the girl eager to grow up and act 'as a woman' (i.e. have a husband and thereby a sex life) while physically remaining as youthful as Sissi.

Yet, *Monpti* represented a shift away from the outdated, princess imagery. She wears modern and fashionable clothes, dances a frenzied Rock n roll with Buchholz (whose teenager persona was considered very modern at the time by means of characters in *Marianne de ma jeunesse* by Julien Duvivier in 1955, and *Die Halbstarken* by Georg Tressler in 1956 for which he was nicknamed the 'German James Dean' as documented on the US film poster), and some furtive elements of physical eroticism are introduced. In a scene that shows the couple kissing on the banks of the Seine, the wind blows her skirt revealing her legs and underwear. The legs' pose and high heels recall the pin-up attitude (fig. 11, left) and the moment itself might be a reference to the canonical image of Marilyn Monroe standing on a subway grate in *The Seven Years Itch* (Billy Wilder, 1955). Contrary to Monroe's (apparent) confidence and ownership of the instant, Schneider quickly readjusts her dress and looks embarrassed while Monpti adopts a disappointing face after she brushes off his hand coming up her thigh. Her character shows some initiative: she decides to pose for Monpti and strips down, revealing her body covered with a towel, her bare back to the camera. Although Anne-Claire refuses to go through and rushes out, the audience had a glimpse of Schneider's naked body, especially her back. Her straight posture and thin waist resulted in a harmonious hour-glass figure – an important detail, for the exposure of Schneider's bare back will become central to her feminine identity (fig. 11, right).

Notwithstanding this significant development for her image, advertising material favoured the film's romantic angle over its sexual aspect, emphasising Schneider's maiden role: '[She] is the lovely Anne-Claire, Monpti's innocent lover. A charming *petite Parisienne* with her despairing heart […]. A beautiful, tender girl who hides her poverty and the depth of her feelings behind charming little dangers […]' (Herzog Filmverleih, *Monpti* [press release]). German-speaking media followed this marketing trend and did

not really pick up on Schneider's eroticism. They instead pointed out the romanticism of the narrative, and Schneider's continuous 'youth', 'charm', and a 'new powerful performance' (*Der Abend*, 01/10/1957). But some noticed the star's transitional state towards maturity and womanhood ('The "Sissi" from yesterday is not an adolescent anymore, and not yet a woman. She stands on the edge of love, modest and desirable, ready to take the leap', *Berliner Montags Echo*, 07/10/1957; '*Monpti* demonstrates her true ability', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 16/09/1957). In spite of the film's ambiguous eroticism, the moral status quo is restored: Anne-Claire hesitates too long and dies as a virgin following a car accident. This introduced another unprecedented dimension to her star image – tragedy.

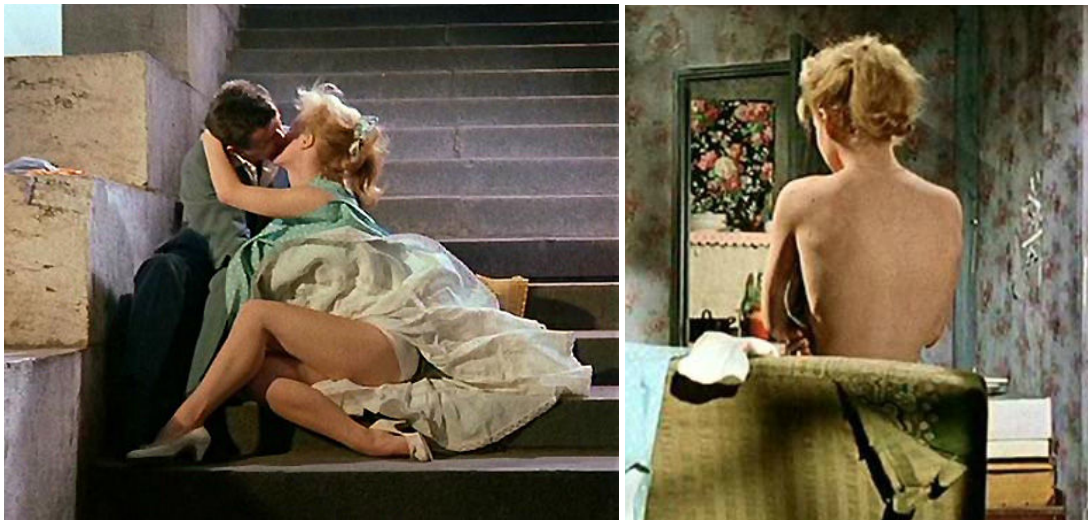

Fig. 11. Schneider's pin-up moment (left) and bare back (right) in *Monpti* (1957).

2.2. Girls in Uniform

Schneider's princess image was still present in 1957 with the release of *Sissi 3* shortly after *Monpti*. Although Schneider died on screen for the first time in the latter and the theme was touched upon in the former, I would like to focus on another of her dramatic post-Sissi roles: Manuela in *Mädchen in Uniform* / *Girls in Uniform* (Géza von Radványi, 1958). The all-female cast drama explores the topic of lesbianism and female affection as the schoolgirl Manuela, who recently lost her mother, develops feelings for the students' favourite teacher Fräulein von Bernburg (Lilli Palmer), and openly expresses her love before attempting suicide.

One cannot document Schneider's presence in *Girls in Uniform* without mentioning its source, the German classic and (probably) first lesbian film of sound

cinema *Mädchen in Uniform*[4] (Leontine Sagan, 1931), with Hertha Thiele and Dorothea Wieck in respectively Manuela and von Bernburg roles.[5] Contrary to its 1958 remake, *Mädchen* was a commercial and critical success at the time, in West Germany and abroad. Comparisons between the two films were drawn: in the eyes of critics, *Girls in Uniform*'s main flaw was its toned-down treatment of lesbianism and female desire. While Sagan advanced a feminine construction of lesbianism (as analysed by Richard Dyer in his 1990 essay 'Less and more than women and men'[6]), von Radványi repressed the emotional-erotic approach to the teacher-pupil relationship, replacing it with a less subversive and clearer mother-daughter bond, and insisted on the negative view of Prussian discipline personified by the cold and rigid principal (Therese Giehse). In that regard, comparing *Girls in Uniform* to *Olivia* (Jacqueline Audry, 1950), another film set in an all-girls school (starring Edwige Feuillère, Simone Simon, and Marie-Claire Olivia)[7], is equally instructive to determine where Schneider stood. In *Mädchen* and *Olivia*, the central relationship can be seen simultaneously a teacher-student, mother-daughter, and a lesbian one, and it is their overlaps and blurring that make both the enjoyment and congeniality of the films. Yet, *Girls in Uniform* separates them, losing (to a large extent) the glow of love and the palpable desire between von Bernburg and Manuela.

Instead, the film places strong emphasis on the missing mother. In a scene at the beginning that sets the tone but does not exist in the earlier film, Manuela visits and flowers her mother's grave. This absence defines the character, which is enhanced by Schneider's persona established around her own mother Magda's continuing on- and off-screen presence, pushing forward the idea that Manuela has to look for a substitute. A second key element was changed from *Mädchen*: the play performed by the girls for the

[4] To avoid confusion I use *Girls in Uniform* to refer to the film with Schneider and *Mädchen in Uniform* (or the abbreviated *Mädchen*) to refer to Sagan's film.

[5] All the histories of German cinema mention the film which has been the subject of much critical and scholarly writing: Nancy Scholar (1975), Mädchen in Uniform, *Women and Film*, 2:7, pp. 68-72; Ruby J. Rich (1981), *Mädchen in Uniform*: from repressive tolerance to erotic liberation, *Jump Cut*, 24/25, pp. 44-50; Karola Gramann and Heide Schlüpmann (1983), 'Liebe als opposition, Opposition als Liebe', in: Hans Helmut Prinzler (ed.), *Hertha Thiele*, pp. 24-43; Richard Dyer (1990), Less and more than women and men: lesbian and gay cinema in Weimar Germany, *New German Critique*, 51, pp. 5-60.

[6] Also reprised the same year in his seminal book *Now you see it: studies on lesbian and gay film*.

[7] See Elaine Burrows (1981), Jacqueline Audry, *Frauen und Film*, 28, pp. 22-27; and Brigitte Rollet (2015), *Jacqueline Audry: la femme à la camera*.

principal's birthday is *Romeo and Juliet* (*Don Carlos* by Friedrich Schiller in the 1931 version), and it is a private rehearsal of Manuela's lines as Romeo that motivates her first kiss with von Bernburg (a good-night kiss in the presence of the other girls in the original). Romeo is the romantic hero par excellence, and it is in his guise that Schneider and Palmer share their kiss, thus altering Manuela's homo-eroticism into hetero-romanticism. And finally, while in *Mädchen* Manuela's declaration of love inspires von Bernburg to have the courage of her feelings against the wrath of the patriarchy (embodied by the headmistress), the end of the 1958 version is more conventional: von Bernburg is reconciled with the principal. The film closes with the latter walking off into the shadows of a corridor, but she is not defeated as in *Mädchen*. Before that, she took Manuela's hand, lying on her infirmary bed, and looked at the teacher – both knew that the schoolgirl, more than an erotic relationship, was all along longing for *a* relationship, and that she mistook her desire for maternal void. Thus, by focussing on the mother-daughter relationship and emphasising the romanticism of Schneider's role, the film minimises Manuela's lesbian desire as an adolescent phase.

That said, the dramatic tone of the film and the role of Manuela demanded a nuanced performance on Schneider's part which extended her acting repertoire with new and subtle variations. As Manuela, she has little dialogue, rarely smiles, makes few eye contacts, and adopts a distant gaze (her character is poised and calm, with an air of sobriety and fragility) – the opposite of the bubbly and energetic Sissi. She also performed more tragic emotions than she has ever done before. Although the emphasis in the film tends not to dwell on the young woman's desire, there are scenes with ambiguous moments, such as the one where von Bernburg gives her shirt to Manuela. In *Mädchen*, Manuela's ardour was expressed through a substantial use of close-ups, which are very scarce in *Girls in Uniform*. Yet, rather incongruously, this defining moment for Schneider's character is captured in a close-up of her face: tears appear in her eyes, she moves slowly and intimates a smile. She is moved by von Bernburg's gentleness – there is vulnerability and sadness in Schneider's performance. Rather than Hertha Thiele's erotic anticipation or trembling adoration, at that moment Schneider expresses nonetheless Manuel's desire and makes her convey more than admiration or filial affection for her professor.

This moving expression was new to Schneider's image but the attempt to move beyond Sissi failed. Despite its lesbian romance, a controversial theme at a time when lesbian and gay representations on film were rare, the 1958 revisiting had no critical or

commercial impact, and no hold on Schneider's image. The role of Manuela remained the exception in the actress's consistently light-hearted filmography at the time. She remained attached to her well-established trope of the mother-daughter dyad and continued to star as the ingénue in the romantic films that followed.

2.3. Eva, Fanny, and Katia

In 1958, after *Girls in Uniform*, Schneider starred in *Christine*, met Alain Delon and moved to Paris (see later). Still, like a compelling illustration of the extent of her typecasting, her next films remained on well-charted territories with yet more ingénue roles. Although their narratives might suggest modern and risqué topics and incorporate erotic elements, *Die Halbzarte* (Thiele, 1959), *Die schöne Lügnerin* (von Ambesser, 1959), and *Katia* (Siodmak, 1959) did not depart from the traditional and morally conservative trend posited by the *Sissi* trilogy. In the first, Schneider's character Nicole writes anonymously a racy play about sex but the film's treatment of eroticism and *grivoiserie* is misleading. It starts as a funny and open-minded representation of an unconventional family of artists (Magda Schneider appears alongside her daughter in their last collaboration, as well as Josef Meinrad and Richard Eybner from the *Sissi*s), but at the end Nicole marries the male protagonist and the ending sees her co-opted into the patriarchal family as wife and future mother. In *Die schöne Lügnerin* Schneider's Fanny is a corsetiere who charms Tsar Alexander I of Russia, Metternich, and the French Ambassador (in addition to her fiancé Martin) during the congress of Vienna (1815). And in *Katia* she plays the title character, a schoolgirl who becomes the mistress[8] and then morganatic wife of Alexander II of Russia a few months before his assassination in 1881. *Die schöne Lügnerin* and *Katia* are historical costume films in which her characters commit white lies, a formula familiar to Schneider and her audiences – the actress's comic performance induced by the lie projected the image of the whimsical and charming girl out to seduce the male protagonist (played by Jean-Claude Pascal and Curd Jürgens respectively, both Tsars in each film). All three love stories share an ensemble of traits already associated with Schneider, such as the light-hearted comedy aspect, the mistaken identity plot, and the fairy-tale-like ascent of the heroine falling in love with a man of higher social background. The novelty was that to compose such characters Schneider's sexual aura and body and the ways they were presented were now different: these roles

[8] She was 19 years old, the Emperor 48.

meant that she had to appear seductive, sometimes openly flirtatious, but refrain from being actively sexual within the narrative.

Die Halbzarte is set in modern times and the attempt to further eroticise Schneider is visible and more insistent than in her other films. She wears modern and fashionable clothes, and displays a new dark blond hairdo: a bouffant short bob with a fringe, whose realisation by famous Parisian *maître coiffeur* Alexandre was documented in the French press ('Sissi: a new hairdo for her Parisian fiancé', *Paris Match*, 21/06/1958). Her clothes and the framing emphasised her legs, hips, and buttocks as well. She is introduced with a close-up of her feet perched on a library ladder, the camera slowly going up her legs, onto her tight skirt. Her glasses and her tight bun refer to the dumb blonde stereotype (see Dyer, 1979) and iconic representatives like Marilyn Monroe, Judy Holliday and Brigitte Bardot, with a clear reference to the latter in her secretary role in *Une Parisienne* (Michel Boisrond, 1957). Even more daring because performed by Schneider is the club scene in which she engages in a flirting competition with another woman and slowly runs her tongue on her upper lip, her face close to her dance partner, her eyes half-closed. She repeats the suggestive gesture in front of her bedroom mirror in a short revealing nightgown, practising her kissing pout, pursing her red lips (fig. 12). The magazines featured the star's new look but had difficulties connecting it to a change of image and the Sissi tag was still persistent: 'Romy Schneider (Sissi) changes her look in Paris' (*Marie-Claire*, 01/09/195), 'Romy Schneider, the young model girl of German cinema' (*Elle*, 05/01/1959), 'Romy Schneider chose the sex-appeal' (*Ciné Revue*, 23/01/1959). Covers featured Romy wearing one of her form-fitting dresses from *Die Halbzarte* (a top with thin straps and a low square neck that revealed the shape of her breasts), her green eyes slightly squinting and looking up, the shape of her lips accented by crimson makeup (*Ciné Revue*, 23/01/1959, cover; *Revue*, 24/01/1959, cover).

Fig. 12. Schneider's suggestive pout in *Die Halbzarte* (1959).

Moving on to *Die schöne Lügnerin* and *Katia*[9], other parts of Schneider's body were at the centre of attention, notably her breasts and waist. As in the *Sissi*s, costumes enhanced Schneider's feminine body, in line with fashions of the time. Her most noteworthy costume in *Die schöne Lügnerin* is an evening dress inspired by the Empire silhouette[10]: dresses were closely fitted to the torso just under the bust, falling loosely below. The high waistline and the absence of corset display the long line of the body, as well as the curves of the female bosom (Aaslestad, 2006). Schneider's periwinkle blue dress was made of lightweight fabric, creating a flowing effect, with a low neckline and short sleeves, and her bare arms are covered with long white gloves. Her chest is accentuated by her posture: the moment when she suggestively bends over was used as a production still for the film's press material (fig. 13, left). As for Katia's dresses, they remain in the same vein as Sissi's: full-skirted ball gowns that relied on crinolines and hoops, with low neckline and short off-the-shoulder sleeves which fit Schneider's petite frame as analysed in chapter 1. With the tight bodices emphasising her lean waist, Schneider wears Katia's opulent gowns with the ease, poise and gracefulness inherited from Sissi (fig. 13, right). Far from erasing her princess persona, her looks in *Katia* reinforced it.

Notice also Schneider's eyebrows during those years: they were shortened, arched, and filled up with dark brown makeup, which hardened them and left a large nude

[9] *Katia* was yet another remake for Schneider. The original was the eponymous French film by Maurice Tourneur in 1938 with Danielle Darrieux.

[10] The Empire silhouette was created in late 18th/early 19th century in reference to the First French Empire, and itself inspired by Neoclassical tastes.

space at the centre of her face and enlarged her eyes. This alteration had a major impact on her coquettish 'œillade': the uncanny knowingness was reinforced, and her seductive glance, held slightly longer, became more erotically evocative (fig. 14). With this performance sign, Schneider reconciled two opposite traits of her characters – the ingénue and the seductress. The characterisation, dialogues and narrative situations may signify wholesomeness, but Schneider's eye performance, in tandem with her playful smile, brought a sense of adulthood to the mix. This sidelong 'œillade' was a personal contribution that suggested her emancipation: she began to appear provocative.[11]

I would like now to go back momentarily to Schneider's recurring status of the ideal daughter figure, but this time in relation to paternal figures, for this shift represented another way for the star's persona to emancipate on screen. Schneider proceeded from being the young girl sided by a powerful mother figure (notably Magda Schneider, on and off screen), to the sexy young woman, a difference highlighted by her pairing with older father figures in many of her 1956-1959 films. Her ambiguous relation to a father figure first started with *Kitty*, in which the paparazzo's snatched picture of the young heroine with the British politician confirmed that the Schneider-Hasse couple was potentially sexual. Then, in *Scampolo*, *Die Halbzarte*, *Ein Engel auf Erden*, *Die schöne Lügnerin* and *Katia*, Schneider's love interests are all experienced men, portrayed by Paul Hubschmid, Carlos Thompson, Henri Vidal, Jean-Claude Pascal and Curd Jürgens, all between 10 to 22 years older than her. The mother figure, central as we saw in Schneider's image of the demure young woman, progressively stepped down in favour of a paternal figure, echoing the redefinition of masculine identities in German-speaking countries.[12] However, this emancipation remained limited and innocent: the play on potentially incestuous father-daughter relations was unequivocal – they remained overall patriarchal. Here too the comparison to Bardot is enlightening. While Bardot's characters reflected on the sexual taboo of the erotic father-daughter relationship[13] (in *Futures Vedettes*, Marc Allégret, 1955; *Cette sacrée gamine*, Michel Boisrond, 1956; *Et Dieu… créa la femme*; and *En cas de malheur*, Claude Autant-Lara, 1958), the on-screen version suggested by

[11] I did not comment on Schneider's voice in *Die schöne Lügnerin* and *Katia* because she was dubbed in these two French-dominated co-productions.

[12] See Moeller, 1989 and 1993; Heineman, 1994 and 1996; Lennox, 2004; Krämer, 2012; and Fritsche, 2013.

[13] See Ginette Vincendeau (1992), Family plots: the fathers and daughters of French cinema, *Sight and Sound*, March, pp. 14-17.

Schneider was certainly playful, even rebellious and sexy, but never openly erotic. Schneider's persona was still, above all, defined by innocence and wholesomeness.

Fig. 13. Schneider's costumes in press materials for *Die schöne Lügnerin* (left) and *Katia* (right).

Fig. 14. Schneider's more provocative glance in *Die schöne Lügnerin* (1959).

* * *

These films, now swept under the carpet in most accounts and writings on Schneider, are in fact emblematic of a turning point in her career and life. They indicate the tension between, on the one hand, continuity with her wholesome persona, and, on the other hand, departure towards a new era represented by her sexiness, resulting in a

grey area in terms of star image definition. Indeed, too much alteration to the ingénue figure would have meant audiences staying away from Schneider's films – continuity has always been paramount for stars as it founds their personas and solidifies their popularity; but stasis and repetition present the risk to bore both a star and her audiences, in such case modification and variety become necessary.

Pursuing what I have pointed out as her coming-of-age over the course of the *Sissi* cycle, Schneider became a sexy young woman: whilst she physically grew up and her body was more exposed on camera (cleavage, legs, back), she asserted a growing sexual identity. Yet, the films' overall narrative remained conventional and normative in patriarchal terms. German-speaking and French producers and distributors wished to hang on to the success acquired with the *Sissi*s (and the steady income it represented, Schneider and Seydel, 1989, pp. 108-109) so they repeated the trilogy's well-proofed formula with *Die schöne Lügnerin* and *Katia*, both historical costume films, with minor variations – the spectacle of Schneider's costumes, the glorious sets and the Viennese waltzes remained the central attraction. The motif of the star's *mise en abyme*, as represented by Schneider's arrival at the ball in *Sissi 1* for example, became even more momentous considering her status in the late 1950s: when she first appears dressed in her blue gown in *Die schöne Lügnerin*, when she is framed at the top of the stairs in *Katia*, or when her character is chosen by the Tsar to open the ball and she emerges from the crowd (moments emphasised by the solemnity of the music), Schneider is singled out by an apparatus that echoes her appearances in *Mädchenjahre einer Königin* and the *Sissi*s.

Producers were still hesitant to show her engaging in explicit sexual relationships with male (or female) co-stars, and her characters' sexual desire was usually a step towards marital bliss and home happiness, the pillars of normative women's roles in 1950s patriarchal Europe, where women were 'seen as the foundation of reconstruction and agents of cultural stability' (Weiner, 2001, p. 6). This tension between ingénue and erotic woman reflected the tension between tradition and modernity at a transitional time for European women's identities, especially in post-war German-speaking countries.

Indeed, the trajectory of Schneider's identity was a product of 1950s West German society, of both youth mentality and the educated bourgeoisie. Sabine Hake points out to the 'narrow-mindedness of [the] emerging *Wohlstandsgesekschaft* (affluent society)', functioning 'as a protection against past trauma' and relying on social conventions, conservative family values, and a sexual repressive morality (2008, pp. 97, 101, 112). Schneider epitomised this proclivity. The cultural imperative of her on-screen intactness

(her characters remain virgin and cannot be sexually active if they are not properly married) found both root and echo off screen with her Catholic, morally solid and bourgeois stepfamily presenting a united front in media – Magda Schneider's dutiful daughter would make a desirable wife. Since Romy's first and definite image was defined at the early days of her career by both her relationship with her mother and her female purity, finding an alternative outside of the codes that determined the 'eternal feminine' (Weiner defines the 'eternal feminine' as 'the ideology […] whereby women must ultimately sacrifice their individuality for the good of the family', 2001, p. 38) proved to be challenging.

Therefore, was her emerging modernity a façade? Schneider was concurrently a sentimental and erotic figure: she asserted her sexuality (source of power and self-determination at the time), but it remained clean and safe. Her wholesomeness, to some extent, represented another understanding of modernity – she became the unthreatening modern woman. As Georg Seeßlen has argued, West Germany in the 1950s 'settled for something [that] was neither new […] nor old […], but rather a third way in between' (1989, p. 140, quoted and translated in Bergfelder, 2006, p. 48), and Schneider bears out this argument. Like her characters on screen, Schneider's image was suspended between the wish to move forward and the inclination to hold back. In the landscape of late 1950s European cinema and the rise of on-screen eroticism with major female stars such as Sophia Loren, Gina Lollobrigida, Diana Dors and Bardot, Schneider found herself in a delicate position with an emerging new and openly sexy image yet one still burdened by her ideal young woman status.

Thus, Schneider's personal endeavour to accept bolder and more suggestive roles such as Anne-Claire and Manuela, and then to refuse the ingénue parts that were presented to her after *Katia* (interview with Schneider by François Chalais, 11/05/1962) in the hope of dismissing her good girl image, created resistance from different parties, to begin with the people directly concerned by her acting choices – her parents. Magda Schneider and Hans Herbert Baltzheim had both financial and creative control over Romy's career and press relations. To no longer have hands on Romy's career had consequences on their lives and finances: as we saw Magda relied on the 'perfect duo' dynamic elaborated with her daughter since their first on-screen collaboration in 1953 to regain her prominent star status, which she lost again once she stopped working with Romy. As for Baltzheim, he invested Romy's fees into his business of hotels and restaurants (*Der Spiegel*, 07/03/1956, pp. 34-41) and he insisted that she accepted *Sissi 2*

and *Sissi 3* (Schneider and Seydel, 1989, pp. 108, 156) and *Katia*, evoking money (she received the colossal amount of 750,000 Deutschmarks for her role of Katia, Krenn, 2013a, p. 128). But it was not in these agitated terms that the media framed the Schneiders' narrative: the family tensions and pressure were hidden by the parents for whom it was capital to present the picture of a harmonious family. For example, Romy and Magda attended events for the opening of Blatzheim's establishments, or appeared together at the Cannes Film Festival on several occasions (*Sissi 3* and *Die Halbzarte* were presented in competition in 1958 and 1959).[14]

3. Rebellion on and off screen

This period of confusion, both for the star and the definition of her image is well-exemplified by *Christine* (Pierre Gaspard-Huit, 1958). In this French costume drama, Schneider reprised the role that made her mother famous in *Liebelei* (Max Ophüls, 1933), stressing even more the continuity from Romy's previous ingénue roles and the importance of Magda's position in her daughter's career. Romy, due to her star status, had the prerogative to choose her partner and, based on photographs, she selected a *jeune premier* (a heartthrob), French actor Alain Delon.[15]

3.1. A Decisive encounter

Christine tells the ill-fated love story between Franz, a young Lieutenant (Delon), and Christine, an apprentice Opera-singer (Schneider) who commits suicide after he is killed in a duel. The film came out in France in December 1958, three months after *Sissi 3*, and was a great success with nearly three million spectators (Simsi, 2012, p. 23): it clearly benefitted from the highly publicised romantic relationship between its two young stars. Indeed, if *Christine* did not depart from Schneider's dominant *Sissi*-related star image (Christine is sweet, friendly, well-mannered and respectable), it marked a milestone for the continuation of her coming-of-age narrative as a star off screen. Schneider and Delon shared the same slender facial features: square jawline and cat-like green eyes for her, hollow cheeks and ironic smile for him. In the film, they echo each other physically, but

[14] 'Romy Schneider at home: at Berchtesgaden' (*Ciné Revue*, 28/03/1958); 'Romy Schneider. Berlin is still Berlin' (*Revue*, 24/01/1959); 'Romy Schneider: Cannes Film Festival' (*Zondagsvriend*, 14/05/1959); 'Alain and Romy: 15 minutes of charm at the festival' (*Paris Match*, 23/05/1959); *Bunte*, 03/03/1965.

[15] Delon had only worked in two French films before: *Quand la femme s'en mêle* (Yves Allégret, 1957) and *Sois belle et tais-toi* (Marc Allégret, 1957).

also literally: they pledge their eternal love on top of hill, loudly interlacing their words in the void, echoing one another (fig. 15). They had what has been called an 'on-screen chemistry' (see Wright Wexman, 1993; Nochimson, 2002) reinforced by the film's narrative: Delon is as broody and seductive (Franz has an affair with a married woman which leads to the tragic conclusion) as Schneider is luminous and positive. Christine and Franz are the romantic couple par excellence, which speaks of Schneider's star image's hesitation: like Romeo and Juliet, they are beautiful and tragic but do not consummate their love and as many films of that period she finishes the film still a virgin. The Christine-Franz couple channelled the real life couple who attracted tremendous media attention for the entire duration (and beyond) of their five-year-long relationship that was not to the taste of Schneider's mother.

Fig. 15. Alain Delon and Romy Schneider in *Christine* (1958).

3.2. The rebellious daughter

As I have documented, films with settings that departed from the *Sissi*s (*Robinson*), demanding roles (*Monpti*, *Girls in Uniform*), and more suggestive bodily presentation (*Monpti*) did not truly challenge Schneider's dominant image of the ingénue. She then made the radical decision to cross borders: after *Christine*, her first French film, she moved to Paris with Delon, and took her distance from the German-speaking film industry and her family. However, her on-screen image lagged behind her off-screen life. As we saw, the films that she made after this relocation (*Die Halbzarte*, *Ein Engel auf Erden*, *Die schöne Lügnerin*, and *Katia*) still carried her wholesome young woman image. Her departure for Paris was widely covered by media on both sides of the French-German border, and is still the object of journalistic examinations (documentaries *Legenden:*

Romy Schneider, 1998; *Un jour, un destin*, 2010, and *Romy, de tout son coeur*, 2016). A common discourse is that the French- and German-speaking press were opposed at the time: that the first welcomed her with open arms whilst the latter insulted her. Although it is true that their opposing views had repercussions for Schneider's career, my research suggests that this chasm took a few years to open. I have come to the conclusion that this infamous Germanic trend that saw her 'rebellion' as taking aim at the nation (Schneider was Sissi and, thenceforth, a national treasure) was in fact gradually assembled around the mid-1970s and carried out up until now (Senfft, 1992; Troller, 2007, pp. 22-32; Krenn, 2013a, pp. 141-142).

My research shows that the beginning of the polarisation between German-speaking and French-speaking press and audiences took its roots in a continuous false account of the mother-daughter dynamic. Because Schneider left the family home and her 'exemplary mother' (*Elle*, 05/01/1959, pp. 48-51), and was living out of wedlock with a French man, she betrayed the motherland ('Romy Schneider: in exile for love', *Quick*, 07/10/1962; *Der Spiegel*, 13/03/1963, pp. 79-84), a line of discourse turned in the 1970s by the French press to the benefit of Schneider who, with the help of Delon, finally 'broke free' from Germany and the malevolent Magda (Arnould and Gerber, 1986; Muscionico, 2008; Isaac, 2009; Thibault, 2010; Petit, 2014). As I shall examine later, the media turnaround on the Schneider family saga, its volume and endurance, casts a light on national, cultural and social motivations in 1970s France and West Germany. However arduous it is to trace back the exact origin of such rhetoric, my investigations indicate that the depreciation of the French press for Magda do not date from her daughter's first departure for France, but that details emerged later, when Romy herself shared with reporters how it had become important for her to participate in Occupation films.

I challenge this French myth of the smothering and evil mother. Indeed, in-depth research into Romy's own writing, television appearances and press coverage shows that Magda and Romy's relationship was not as conflictual as the French media were eager to report in the 1970s. As it was later revealed (see Schneider and Seydel, 1989), there were indeed some quarrels at the time, but as far as I can tell it was not known by neither French nor German and Austrian audiences in the late 1950s, and the press was rather cordial and circulated an image of off-screen homely bliss that echoed that familiarly displayed

in Schneider's films[16]. Some film journals even saw her engagement with Delon as positive for her career and expressed hope for collaborations with artists of the Nouvelle Vague in Paris[17]. Romy's stepfather insisted on the couple's regard for their family's bourgeois, traditional and catholic values: 'If Romy marries, it will be announced according to all social rules' (*Bravo*, 13/07/1958). Eight months later, on 22nd March 1959, he organised an engagement ceremony in the family villa in Morcote near Lugano (Switzerland) attended by the European press (print and television). Photographs show that the fiancés wear formal and fashionable clothes (a suit and a tie for him, a designer dress for her with a pendant cross around her neck) and both display fashionable hairstyles. Mother and daughter look radiant, smiling at the cameras: Romy with a large bouquet in her hands, and Magda on Delon's arm. Another photo spread (commissioned by *Bunt*, and featured in *Paris Match* too) shows the young couple spending the 1962 Christmas holidays in Lugano: they bring presents, decorate the tree, enjoy a stroll in the gardens, bake in the family kitchen, wearing aprons covered with flour. Proof if any that German-speaking audiences did not hold a grudge – yet – after her departure for Paris, the popular press's pleaded for her to come back to Germany after completing *Die schöne Lügnerin* and *Katia* ('Romy Schneider - Enchanting as in *Sissi*', *Österreichische Film und Kino Zeitung*, 20/06/1959). The media insisted that there was a demand from European audiences for films similar to the *Sissi*s (or better: a fourth *Sissi*) and how she 'disappointed many fans with sex' (*Funk und Film*, 08/08/1959).

Conclusion

My analysis of Schneider's career trajectory during the 1956-1959 period reflects so far the more global and persistent 'in-betweenness' (Meyers Spack, 1982) that became characteristic of her star image after the *Sissi*s: she moved from roles to roles and yet remained associated with Sissi. Her typecasting in the post-*Sissi*s years proved rather complex: it was the result of a series of decisions that are not necessarily all documented, and she carried an image balancing between continuity and change. Schneider's box office draw declined between 1958 and 1959, yet due to the success of the *Sissi* trilogy

[16] 'Romy Schneider: a wonderful fairy-tale-like career' (*Jeunesse Cinéma*, June 1958); 'For Romy "Sissi" Schneider, Alain Delon has only one face: the face of love' (*Point de vue, Images du monde*, 27/03/1959); 'Romy Schneider & Alain Delon: this spring's bride and groom' (*Bunte*, 11/04/1959).

[17] 'A French-Austrian co-production' (*Österreichische Film und Kino Zeitung*, 04/04/1959).

she remained the best paid female star of German-speaking cinema. In 1959, her fees per role ran from 500,000 to 750,000 Deutschmarks (Krenn, 2013a, p. 128) although she fell from first to 20th place on German film theatres' popularity scale (*Der Spiegel*, 13/03/1963, p. 82; Schneider and Seydel, 1989, p. 161). Profaning her virgin persona was also an issue for French producers who apparently could not envision the star out of her well-established identity that made her recognisable, and therefore profitable, throughout continental Europe. After *Katia*, she refused roles that appeared too similar to her ingénue image or the *Sissi* films; though it is capital to keep in mind that the discourse of Schneider trying to 'escape Sissi' is also part of a larger and retrospective construction informed and fuelled by journalistic accounts. In spite of Schneider's audacious blow to move to Paris and the breaking of her perfect fit with the Sissi figure, a full transformation of her screen image required several years in the second phase of her career that took an international turn.

PART II

Romy Schneider's International Career: 1960-1969

Chapter I. Negotiating an alternative image in European art cinema

Introduction

This part focuses on the construction of Romy Schneider's persona through film roles and media presence in the second phase of her career, which took first a European turn in terms of film production (and not just film reception as was the case for the *Sissi* trilogy). This new phase was initiated in the last two years of the 1950s, and then followed an international curve. The 1960s represent a complex transition period for Schneider. In the first half of the decade, she projected a glamorous image of femininity, yet her persona oscillated between three conflicting poles: the sophisticated *bourgeoise*, the 'serious actress' of art cinema, and the erotic woman. I structure this second part of the thesis into three chapters, but with some unavoidable disturbance to strict chronology, as her films did not necessarily follow such neat phases.

1. *Lysistrata* and *Plein Soleil*: transitional roles

In 1958, Schneider moved in with Alain Delon in Paris. Her declarations to the press signal her desire to be considered a serious actress (interview by France Roche, 1961; interview by Georges Kleinmann, 19/02/1962; Schneider and Seydel, 1989, p. 155). Her first encounter with serious drama occurred in 1960 in the controversial television play *Die Sendung der Lysistrata*, directed by Fritz Kortner and based on Aristophanes's *Lysistrata*. The TV film intertwined historical and modern settings in a self-reflexive *mise en abyme*. Agnes (Barbara Rütting, who also plays the title role) has invited a couple (Schneider in the double role of Myrrhine/Uschi Hellwig, and Karl Lieffen) to watch the broadcast of a television play in which she stars. The two female characters appear in this TV film located in ancient Greece where Lysistrata persuades the other women to withhold sexual privileges as a means of forcing men to end the long and destructive war between Athens and Sparta. As Myrrhine, Schneider teases her husband (Peter Arens) with the prospect of imminent intercourse; she sensually lies down on her bed but rejects him at the last minute. In another scene, she guides his hand to cup her breasts above her dress, bites her lower lip, and expresses her desire to have sex. *Die Sendung der Lysistrata*

had many opponents in West Germany, who objected to the play's morality (*Der Spiegel*, 14/12/1960, pp. 83-84)[1] and it received negative responses in the press[2], although Kortner toned down Aristophanes's crude dialogue[3]. Significantly, reviews were not enthusiastic over Schneider's performance, pointing out how 'strange' it was to hear 'the interpret of Sissi' delivering sexually-connoted dialogue (*Der Spiegel*). Schneider's overtly sexual role and performance entered in dissonance with her sweet image yet did not succeed in changing it. More significant in this respect is her cameo in *Plein Soleil*.

Schneider appears for a few seconds at the beginning of *Plein Soleil* – one of the films that turned Delon into a major international star – in the uncredited and unnamed role of one of the friends of American character Freddy Miles (Billy Kearns). She is at the centre of the frame, surrounded by Freddy and Philippe Greenleaf (Maurice Ronet). With one hand she slowly adjusts her hair to clear her face, she flares her nostrils, smirks and purses her lips when Greenleaf and Freddy mention Tom Ripley (Alain Delon). When the latter enters the frame, she performs her familiar 'œillade' in a mix of appreciation and contempt (fig. 1).

Schneider's brief appearance in *Plein Soleil* is more meaningful in many respects than her short screen time would suggest, and it is premonitory in terms of Schneider's new image: she speaks French for the first time on screen, looks stylish, and displays haughty expressions.

[1] Notably the ARD (Arbeitsgemeinschaft der öffentlich-rechtlichen Rundfunkanstalten der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, a joint organisation of Germany's regional public-service broadcasters) in the states governed by the CDU (Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands), such as Württemberg-Baden and Bavaria.

[2] The play finally aired on 17th January 1961 at 10pm with the exception of Bavaria (Na sowas, *Der Spiegel*, 25/01/1961, pp. 50-61) where, shortly before the broadcast, the film was released in some cinemas with an 18-year-old age restriction by the FSK (Lysistrata: Südlich der Gürtellinie, *Der Spiegel*, 18/01/1961, pp. 57-59). *Die Sendung der Lysistrata* aired on Bavarian television screens on 20th April 1975.

[3] Amongst other alterations, Kortner omitted a passage in which Schneider's character should lament that she has not had an 'eight-inch comforter' in a long time (*Der Spiegel*, 18/01/1961, pp. 57-59).

Fig. 1. Romy Schneider in *Plein Soleil* with Alain Delon (foreground left), Billy Kearns (left), and Maurice Ronet (right).

2. The Partnership with Visconti

Visconti and Schneider's short-term collaboration (in 1961, and for *Ludwig* in 1972) had a long-standing impact over her persona. Their artistic pairing was an intricate filmic and extra-filmic construction that incorporates the myth of the author as Pygmalion, modelling a star (Pygmalion's creation Galatea), and the active/passive dichotomy of the muse inspiring the artist. In Greek mythology, muses were the goddesses of the inspiration of literature, science and the arts; this idea of beautiful women providing artistic inspiration through sexual allure has continued throughout the decades despite its overtly sexist connotations, and has been prevalent in film, not least in male auteur cinema (see Bazgan, 2011). Visconti and Schneider, through their common work, and especially 'Il lavoro', embraced but renegotiated the Pygmalion/muse pattern, leading to a new phase in her career and star image.

2.1. 'Tis Pity She's a Whore

Their first project together was also Schneider's first stage experience in the leading role of Annabella in Visconti's stage adaptation of the Renaissance tragedy *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* by John Ford, at the Théâtre de Paris. Alain Delon co-starred. Although the production itself was not highly praised[4], two decisive features in the development of Schneider's image are on display – acting and eroticism. French critics and audiences however were agreeably impressed (Korte and Lowry, 2000, p. 123; Violet, 2000, pp.

[4] 'For Romy and Alain: flowers and thorns' (*Cinémonde*, 18/04/961).

123-124). *Jours de France* commented: 'Romy was a lovely film actress. In a two-hour dress rehearsal Paris discovered a *comédienne*' (12/06/1963, p. 61, my emphasis). Notice the French idiom 'comédienne', which signifies that Schneider had to earn her image of 'seriousness' through hard (stage) work, proving herself worthy of the title. Thenceforth, another layer was also added to her emerging new persona – suffering. Visconti was strict and could be abusive, and Schneider was exhausted (after the premiere she had to be operated of an acute appendicitis, and went back on stage 15 days later). Additional details of Visconti's treatment emerged later from various sources (Violet, p. 120) including the star herself. When evoking *Boccaccio '70* and *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, she explained how Visconti pushed her to her limits but that his inflexible directorial approach gave her confidence and made her 'give all she had' (Schneider and Seydel, 1989, p. 173-177). At the time though, the press discussed the transformation of Schneider's image into a 'serious actress' in infantilising terms: professionally and privately, she relied on adults: her mother, Marischka, and now Visconti. She colluded in this discourse by presenting Visconti as 'her master', 'the one who taught her everything' (interview by France Roche, 1961; she reiterated her allegiance when she dedicated her first César award in 1976 to him). Critics said that he revealed her 'feminine essence': 'He teaches her how to focus, how to use every fibre of her being and thus become aware of her femininity and her real power of seduction' (Benichou and Pommier, 1981, p. 55). This aspect of their relationship eroticised her suffering and was the cornerstone of the intense persona for which Schneider became known in the 1970s.

With a few exceptions **(**'Romy triumph in Paris', *Bunte*, 22/04/1961), *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* was sparsely mentioned in the German-speaking press (*Der Spiegel*, 11/01/1961, p. 63) – the reception of the play marked the starting point of the Germanic media's rejection of Schneider. This denial over Schneider's expansion of her acting register (her first stage role, and in French) was not only based on Germanic nationalistic appropriation, but on the misogynist refusal of her wish to explore her acting abilities and expand her career as well. This illustrates the complexity of the Pygmalion-muse relationship between Visconti and Schneider. As I shall examine it, from a feminist perspective, Schneider's view on her own career through her comments in the press shows a clear case of internalised sexism. The praise over Schneider's new type of performance can therefore be traced back to her role as Annabella, but it was with Pupe in 'Il lavoro' that she reached a bigger audience and linked anew and wider acting range to a new erotic image.

2.2. Il lavoro

During the summer recess of *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, Schneider went to the De Paolis Studios in Rome to shoot Visconti's segment of the anthology film *Boccaccio '70*, a programmatic title as the filmmakers (Vittorio De Sica, Federico Fellini, Mario Monicelli, and Visconti) drew on the erotic aura of *Decameron* by Giovanni Boccaccio, suggesting that audiences would only be 'ready' for such a film by 1970 (Korte and Lowry, 2000, p. 123). Visconti's episode, 'Il lavoro*'* / 'The Job' is set within a luxurious palace and tells the story of a young aristocratic couple in crisis after the husband Ottavio (Tomas Milian) is exposed in the newspapers for visiting call-girls. He is urged by his lawyers to make amends to his wife Pupe (Schneider) as she supports the couple financially, via her rich Austrian father who has now frozen the accounts. Realising that she has been betrayed, Pupe announces that she is planning to find a job to become independent. At the end, she demands of her husband that he pays her to have sex. Ignorant of his wife's suffering, he writes a check to Pupe who lies on the bed, crying.

In the previous chapter, I examined some attempts in post-*Sissi* films to increase Schneider's erotic allure. Visconti's episode in *Boccaccio '70* represents a high point of this evolution. Her transformation is crystallised around two points. First, there is a tension between a proud, class-inflected persona (Pupe is an aristocrat), and vulnerability. Secondly, Visconti's film steps up Schneider's erotic aura in a number of ways: with the theme of the episode (marital prostitution), by denuding more radically the star's body, and through an ostentatious use of costumes designed by Coco Chanel.

Schneider's introduction in 'Il lavoro' is a classic delayed star entrance: no one in the palace knows where Pupe is, they all look for her, and she only appears after 12 minutes, lying on the bedroom's floor. The palace stands as a jewellery case: Schneider is a crown jewel within the lavish interiors, props and costumes. Pupe writes on a pad, a kitten between her elbows, a cigarette in one hand, a smooth jazz tune playing on the record player. She ignores her husband who enters and tries to start a conversation, she mouths her text and satisfyingly smiles. When Ottavio evokes the newspapers' 'lies', she slowly takes her hat off, runs her hand through her hair and casts a knowing glance on the side at her husband before lying back on the floor, ignoring him. Ottavio talks, but the camera stays with Pupe, capturing Schneider's lack of reaction in close-up. She sits up and recites her text. She slightly squints and when Ottavio asks what it is, she says: 'a poem, stupid', raising her chin and eyebrows, putting her lips forward to pronounce distinctly the word 'scemo' ('stupid'). Then she keeps her upper lips slightly raised and

looks up at Ottavio with deep contempt (fig. 2). The camera stays on Schneider's face in close-up when she ironically asks him if he likes her poem, then she switches in a second to a seductive tone and says that she 'adores it' (lengthening the [o] on the Italian word 'adore') and looks up seductively to her husband. Then, Schneider makes Pupe harsher: she mocks her husband's predicaments, walks with her hands on her hips, her cigarette in her mouth. She freely moves from one room to another, fixes her hair with a black headband (Alexandre de Paris designed Schneider's hair), arguing and laughing uproariously at Ottavio's remarks: she owns the space. Schneider orders her husband and the servants around, either in German, or in Italian, dragging the words out. Her elocution, along with her condescending attitude, confer class confidence to Schneider's performance.

Fig. 2. Schneider's contemptuous stare in 'Il lavoro' (1962).

Pupe seems to hold the upper hand over her cheating and whining husband: yet when she decides to work, she painfully understands that she has nothing to offer but her body. Indeed, while Schneider renders Pupe haughty, moments of vulnerability in her performance reveal that the Countess puts on a face, such as when she speaks on the phone with the lawyer. She cynically talks to Ottavio about the hypocrisy of her marriage of convenience, but once he leaves the scene, her true feelings are revealed. Visconti's mise-en-scène and Schneider's performance signal this intensification and the poignant change of tone for the character: the jazzy chamber music of Nino Rota (Dyer, 2010, p. 111) grows louder and Pupe's grief is reinforced by an extreme close-up of Schneider's face and eyes, her voice breaks, her eyes slowly moisten, she flares her nostrils, and a single tear rolls down her cheek (fig. 3). The importance of Schneider's eyes and eyebrows is emphasised by makeup. This focus on the expressivity of her face (her

character's emotional portraiture) brings forward a different articulation of desirability that displaces her feminine sensuality from her body to her face and 'feline' eyes (underlined by the kitten). Similar to the spectacular, to-be-looked-at-ness moments when the narrative is suspended and we admire the star's beauty and body (Mulvey, 1975), the close-ups of Schneider's face and eyes are moments when the narrative becomes secondary, allowing audiences to gaze at the star's beauty and 'enjoy' her performance of vulnerability.

A feminist reading of 'Il lavoro' helps approach Schneider's ambivalent persona in the early 1960s. The segment presents a contradiction. Visconti adopts an empathetic point of view on her character (she suffers from her superficial and boorish husband) and constructs the episode's narrative around her perspective, which is rather rare in his cinema that generally presents 'a dark view on women' (Cottino-Jones, 2010, p. 85). Yet at the same time he associates his empathy with the aesthetic pleasure of exposing Pupe's vulnerability and the torment of a betrayed woman (see Clément, 1988). Visconti's mise-en-scène, Giuseppe Rotunno's cinematography, and Nino Rota's music capitalise on Schneider's anguish for aesthetic purposes: the utmost moments of beauty are constructed through extreme close-ups of her green, cat-like, perfectly made-up eyes in tears, magnifying her fragility and pain. This tension bespeaks a certain masochism on the character's part: Pupe knows that she is in love with a worthless man, but she deliberately chooses to stay in this toxic relationship (Pupe is rich, she could therefore start a new life if she wanted to). At the end, though, Visconti punishes Pupe: she has lost the power play in her interaction with her husband, and submits to the gender-normative organisation of marital roles.

Fig. 3. Close-up of Schneider's tearful eyes in 'Il lavoro'.

Beyond the accent on her face, the mise-en-scène of Schneider's erotic performance in this film illustrates another change of persona, by denuding her body. This process is visible in a key sequence in which Pupe takes a bath, a telling moment that presents the star as the object of a male voyeuristic and fetishist gaze. Schneider picks up the phone in the boudoir, walks with it into a vast dressing room and starts to undress; still talking on the phone she ends up in the bathroom. She speaks vividly in Italian and removes her clothes with ease. In a medium close-up in front of a mirror, she hands the phone to her maid, removes her white slip dress, and examines the reflection of her face and shoulders, adjusting her hair and pearl necklaces, smiling, raising her chin, visibly content with what she sees (fig. 4). The pearls complement Schneider's sun-tanned skin. Her body is lithe (in another shot her arched spine and shoulder blades are visible), and only filmed from her back (the frame stops at her back dimples), as in a scene in *Monpti*. She sits on a stool and resumes her phone call. Schneider's entire naked body is filmed for the first time, but it is a small-scale reflection on the bathroom's mahogany walls, in profile, her legs crossed. Then she turns three-quarter to the camera, her breasts covered by her upper arms (she holds the phone with both hands); the camera rises slightly to leave her breasts out of frame. Schneider's erotic display is more explicit with this role, but the mise-en-scène keeps it discreet and tasteful: the context is a woman doing her toilette – a scene familiar from painting. I have analysed a similar sequence in *Sissi 1*, when the princess and her mother are sharing a bonding moment of confidence in the privacy of a female-secluded room, pointing out the pleasure of being offered a glimpse of an intimate feminine instant. However, the tone of the scene in 'Il lavoro' changes when the camera very briefly adopts Ottavio's point of view: we previously left Pupe to follow his narrative line, and when he re-enters the boudoir we see Schneider in the background seated on a stool, a towel loosely tied around her body. He then appears at the bathroom door and the camera rapidly zooms in for a close-up of Schneider's wet upper back, neck, and hair. The narrative is built around Pupe's perspective, but here Visconti's mise-en-scène underlines male desire. In a tighter close-up, Schneider looks above her shoulder: there are drops of water on her face, her hair is tied up but wet, curly locks frame her face and fall on her forehead, her makeup is less visible, she frowns and says 'What do you want?' (fig. 5). She pretends not to understand her husband's intention (the camera cuts and zooms in on his face and he looks at her, nods with a smile, and eats a grape). He comes behind her and caresses her shoulder and neck. Schneider does not act troubled, and continues her toilet. This long (and fragmented) sequence shows

Pupe/Schneider as aware of the power of her body, her eyes carry an explicit expression of both superiority and sensuality.

Fig. 4. Schneider admires her reflection in ‘Il lavoro’.

Fig. 5. The erotic display of Schneider’s bare back in ‘Il lavoro’.

So far, I have analysed elements of Schneider’s appearance, behaviour and performance that created a new image of class-inflected superiority coupled with vulnerability, as well as erotic attraction. Another layer is that of maturity, to which her Chanel costumes largely contribute, making her move from the girl to the woman. The costumes are visually prominent in the segment (she changes clothes three times and makes other minor changes in-between) and they enhance the actress’s erotic and vulnerable performance – as Schneider dresses down and up again she is rendered both desirable and touching. Her main costume is the signature tailored suit launched in 1954 in Paris, the embodiment of Chanel post-war style. It is traditionally made in soft tweed, with a straight, square, collarless jacket, three-quarter-length sleeves split at the wrists, patch pockets, jewellery buttons, and assembled with a lining (with visible stitching) that matches the blouse or the bodice, and a slightly flared knee-length skirt. The recognisable two-tone nude shoes with a rounded black toe-cap and a matching small tweed hat

complete the look. The head-to-toe ensemble is accessorised with the characteristic Chanel assortment of ropes of pearls and camellia-shaped earrings, gold chain and coin belt (fig. 6). The episode throughout underlines the coordination of costume with other mise-en-scène elements and with the star: the colour palette, fabrics, jewellery and accessories harmoniously echo Schneider's makeup and the colour scheme and richness of the set. The grey suit matches the bedroom's walls and the velvet bed cover, and the pink of the blouse and the jacket's silk lining complements Schneider's lip makeup. The actress wears two other Chanel designs that equally harmonise with the set: a gold brocade ensemble with dark brown fur hat and stole, and a blue dressing gown of shimmering silver brocade on voile (fig. 7).

This coherent aesthetic vision reflects the perfect synergy between Visconti's idea of Pupe as a distinguished mature woman, Schneider's performance, and the style of the House of Chanel, synonymous with luxury, wealth (there is a large bottle of Chanel No. 5 perfume standing prominently next to Pupe's bathtub), and a modern, if privileged, kind of womanhood. Wearing Chanel clothes was adopting a philosophy of independence, comfort, understated elegance (Steele, 1997, p. 28; Baxter-Wright, 2012, p. 75). Chanel opposed designers such as Dior and Balenciaga who triumphed at the time with their corseted silhouette and theatrical dresses (such as the New Look), and instead offered 'practical' fashion, better suited to active women. The tailored suit represented both the traditional *bourgeoise* and elegance associated with the image of the *Parisienne* and casual *chic à la française*[5] (Baxter-Wright, p. 89). To further illustrate this suitability of Chanel's suit to Schneider, I briefly continue my ongoing comparison with Brigitte Bardot. Like Bardot in *Et Dieu… créa la femme* Schneider was 22 when she made 'Il lavoro', but while Bardot was perceived as a *young* rebel with her tousled hair, jeans or shirt dress with rolled-up sleeves, Schneider's suit was part of her new image as a distinguished 'lady'. Even the cut of the suit affects body movement: it appears to demand a pose akin to that of a model. Vogue editor Bettina Ballard explained that Coco Chanel 'invented that famous Chanel stance that looks as relaxed as a cat and has an impertinent chic; one foot forward, hips forward, shoulders down, one hand in a pocket and the other gesticulating' (Picardie, 2011, p. 288). In Visconti's episode, we see Schneider stand with one foot and hips forward, one hand on her hip, and she moves gracefully, with feline

[5] Other examples include Jeanne Moreau in *Les Amants* (Louis Malle, 1958) and Delphine Seyrig in *Baisers volés* (François Truffaut, 1968).

ease. Chanel herself might have taught the star this particular stance and way to walk: a photo session of the two women at Chanel's atelier for a fitting for the film shows them standing together in front of a mirror, perhaps practising (fig. 6 and 8)? Schneider adopted the tailored suit and other Chanel designs in her everyday life and in her press appearances and thereby transferred her on-screen chic, affluent image off screen (*Jours de France*, 15/09/1962: 'Chanel, the inimitable perfection'). However, as I shall now explore, the critical reception of Schneider's role and erotic performance in 'Il lavoro' attests to patriarchal attitudes and traditional gender roles expectations in the early 1960s.

Media discourses privileged Visconti's influence in Schneider's professional transformation, downplayed her own agency and mostly reduced her abilities as an actress to the erotic display of her body. *Der Spiegel* summed up the transformative process of her image and career, still referencing her past and the sweet Empress: 'Sissi became sexy' (*Der Spiegel*, 13/03/1963, p. 84; 'Adieu Sissi, Bonjour Romy', *Festival*, 01/10/1961; 'Romy Schneider writes her name with the S of Sex and Sensation', *De Post*, 28/07/1962). Critics considered only briefly her artistic agency: the reporters who focused on the collaboration between the director and the actress mentioned her contribution, but attributed the locus of power, the paternity of her 'transformation' (Wagner, 1962) to Visconti (and Alain Delon, see later). Although she wanted to dismiss her Sissi image and she negotiated paradoxical traits in her performance of Pupe, extra-filmic texts did not valorise the star's artistic labour, culminating instead in the most literal version of the Pygmalion myth of artistic collaboration – placing the star on the celestial pedestal of pure love ('Luchino Visconti's last love', 'Luchino Visconti fell in love with her', *Mascotte spettacolo*, 28/02/1962). Even more revealing was the press's emphasis on the unthreatening aspect of her sexiness: her eroticism was glamourous and tasteful in its presentation and graceful in its performance and therefore not subversive. As the critic from *Nouvelles littéraires* wrote: '[She] brilliantly *plays* Brigitte Bardot but she is not Bardot' (13/09/1962, my emphasis). This line of discourse was also rooted in her physique (her petite figure), while Sophia Loren and Anita Ekberg, the other female stars of *Boccaccio '70*, presented the 'abundance of their good looks' (Swamp, 1963, p. 16) and 'played their type' (Wagner, 1962). I will now further my examination of Schneider's transition in the early 1960s by considering her relationship with Delon and the couple's dynamic with respect to their career and stardom.

Fig. 6. Schneider wears the iconic Chanel suit in ‘Il lavoro’.

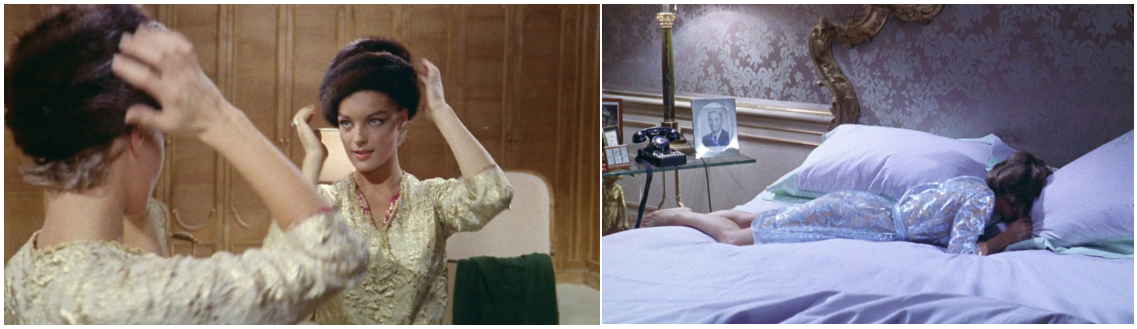

Fig. 7. Two examples of the harmonious colour schemes in ‘Il lavoro’.

Fig. 8. Romy Schneider and Coco Chanel during a fitting for *Boccaccio ’70*.

3. The Myth of the Schneider-Delon couple

During the period under examination in this chapter, Romy Schneider and Alain Delon influenced each other’s career and respective stardom. At the beginning of their

relationship, Schneider's immense popularity undoubtedly played a part in Delon's emerging career. His seductive persona was rapidly established with *Christine* (see Part I, chapter 2), *Faibles Femmes* (Michel Boisrond, 1959) and *Le Chemin des écoliers* (Boisrond, 1959) (Le Gras, 2015, p. 49). However, this relation in which Schneider had the ascendancy soon went into reverse, to her detriment. Delon's career took off with leading roles in *Plein Soleil* and *Rocco e i suoi fratelli* (Visconti, 1961), whilst hers stagnated. Progressively, the media coverage of their relationship put his image at the forefront, and Delon's celebrity and status gained the upper hand over his fiancée's. The couple appeared first together on the cover of *Cinémonde* (17/07/1958) and the magazine organised a contest to win a day with Schneider, but less than a year later Delon was pictured on his own (02/04/1959), and it was now his turn to be offered to the readers as trophy. Within six months, between June 1959 and January 1960, his fees increased exponentially, from 2 to 35 million French francs (Violet, 2000, p. 99).

Schneider's superior status and involvement in Delon's career when they first met was never acknowledged as such in media that quickly depicted her as the supportive and caring woman, proud of her man's accomplishments: 'Romy is in Milan. She is not involved in a film, but is here to comfort her "warrior" […], holding her fiancé's hand' (*Cinémonde*, 29/03/1960). After their official engagement in Schneider's parents' villa in Morcote in March 1959, the couple was for several years the constant object of speculation from the European press regarding their prospective union[6], to the point of being called the 'eternal fiancés' (*Paris Match*, 02/09/1961; 'Romy and Alain are tired of being the eternal fiancés: we'll get married before Christmas', *Oggi*, 13/09/1962), and the 'fiancés terribles' (echoing the French expression 'enfants terribles', *Nous Deux Film*, 09/1960), emphasising their common disdain for the traditional marital institution. When Schneider went to the US in 1963 (see next chapter), the French media reported that she had been advised not to mention to the US press that she was living with her fiancé out of wedlock, but that she had nonetheless been outspoken about it, proudly stating that 'marriage [was] just a vulgar piece of paper' (Swamp, 1963, p. 16). The title 'Europe's little fiancés' ('petits fiancés de l'Europe') is also often used in the contemporary media

[6] 'Alain Delon and Romy Schneider: When are we getting married?' (*Cinémonde*, 03/11/1959); *Ciné magazine*, 01/06/1960; 'Alain Delon and Romy Schneider: don't hold your breath for the wedding' (*Cinémonde*, 08/11/1960); *Ciné Revue*, 24/02/1961 (interview with Alain Delon); 'Cannes - Alain and Romy, the same mysterious ring' (*Paris Match*, 19/05/1962); 'Hey: we live!' (*Bunte*, 05/08/961).

discourse on the stars and reprised in academic and non-academic works (Haymann, 1998, p. 43; Vincendeau, 2000b, p. 171; Le Gras, 2015, p. 152) while in fact, to my knowledge, it was not mentioned in the press coverage of their relationship between 1958 and 1963. 'Europe's little fiancés' is a phrase charged with the symbol of post-war reconciliation between France and Germany (the pairing of 'France's Don Juan'[7] and Germany's national treasure), and was certainly used retrospectively in that sense in the following decades to this date.

Beyond national concerns, the significance of their pairing touched upon an alliance of classes and social types between the sweet girl and the rebellious boy. Indeed, Schneider's non-marital relationship with Delon represented a departure from her Sissi persona embedded, as we saw, in the wholesomeness of marriage and family. The Schneider-Delon couple projected the fantasy image of a serendipitous match between two opposites: she was a popular star, adored all across Europe, she came from a bourgeois family where she was protected and her virtue was valued, he on the other hand was an outsider with a proletarian background, known for his insubordination in the French Indochina War, his insolence, and his devilishly handsome looks (Vincendeau, 2000b, p. 171; Violet, 2000, p. 98; Le Gras, 2015, p. 50). However, Schneider and Delon shared foundational elements for their star couple image: they were young and beautiful. In the previous chapter I referred to their physical resemblance in *Christine*, and Visconti capitalised on this intriguing aspect, pushing it further by casting the couple as brother and sister and incestuous star-crossed lovers in the play *'This Pity She's a Whore*; he said:

> It is a very difficult play, and it needed young, fresh and beautiful actors for the audience to understand why they choose each other. This pair of perfect lovers had to stand out […]. And, Alain and Romy, they look a bit like brother and sister. (*France-Observateur*, 30/03/1961)

Filmed interviews of the early 1960s show the actress in love (her eyes light up at the mention of Delon), and she insists on the importance taken by her fiancé in both her career and personal life. She credits him for encouraging her to wait for 'the right parts' and 'giving her confidence' (interview by François Chalais, 11/05/1962) and for introducing her to Visconti (interview by France Roche, 1961) and allegedly giving her 'permission' to grow up: 'You are a woman […]; it is time that you became a woman on

[7] Le Gras, 2015, p. 46.

screen too' (Swamp, 1963, p. 16). Indeed, Schneider's sex-appeal in *Boccaccio '70* was not only attributed to Visconti's directing, but also to Delon: because she was 'deeply in love', therefore '[expressing] so truly and evidently love [on screen]' (*Le Film Illustré*, 15/07/1962, *Ciné Revue*, 14/06/1962: 'Romy Schneider: talent is love'; Swamp, 1963, p. 16). Schneider's projection of sexuality on and off screen was thus attributed again to the influence of a man.

She also 'candidly' shared her desire to start a family:

> […] to make a life together, a real life outside of this profession' is '[more important than her career] to me, and that was not the case before […], because if it [her career] stops, you have nothing left. If you don't have someone, or a life, or a corner [a home] where you can go, or a child… No, no, I have something above this profession and I hold on to it, and I want to keep it. (Interview by François Chalais, *Reflets de Cannes*, 11/05/1962)

Celebrity coupledom has always increased a desire for knowledge of private life, especially sexuality. Martha P. Nochimson (2002) explores how the great on-screen couples that show particular attraction (she calls them the 'synergistic couple') are 'a cultural legacy of what we thought […] about desire and love' (p. 5). In the early 1960s, the Schneider-Delon pairing engaged with the culture of marriage by reinforcing an ideal image of the heterosexual couple. Although Schneider was living with Delon out of wedlock, she continued to be seen as the paragon of traditional, patriarchal-approved femininity, and thus was presented as a model of identification for female audiences. Because her love was portrayed as 'pure' and her intentions to subscribe to domesticity and motherhood were clearly stated, she remained cemented to the foundation of her previous ideal young woman image – modern, with the right amount of sex-appeal, and submissive to the men in her life. As we saw earlier in this chapter, the power relations between the two stars went into reverse: as a steady topic of the tabloid press, their couple created and multiplied media discourses, but they also reinforced gender stereotypes and patriarchal norms. The Schneider-Delon couple – mostly constructed off-screen – at this stage already contained the founding elements of the synergistic couple that will burst on-screen a few years later in *La Piscine* (see Part II, chapter 3).

Thereupon the French media tended to deny Schneider's agency and self-determination in her career, and yet simultaneously created a paradoxical dual narrative: how she managed to get rid of Sissi while still remaining attached to it. Moreover, at the time of the New Wave, a cultural prejudice against popular film in general and the *Sissi*

trilogy in particular emerged amongst French critics who belittled the massive success of her ingénue character. In turn, Schneider followed this elitist line of discourse and started to deprecate her earlier Germanic career. A telling example can be found in two interviews conducted by French journalist François Chalais during the Cannes Film Festival in early May 1962, where *Boccaccio '70* was presented in competition alongside *L'Eclisse* by Michelangelo Antonioni, with Delon. In the first interview, the reporter praises her 'courage and her intelligence' and congratulates her for successfully changing her Sissi image, with a deliberately condescending attitude towards Marischka's films, and in the other he takes his leave saying 'goodbye Sissi'. Chalais's second interview, featuring the star couple, also illustrates Delon's blatant sexism (he cuts her off, answers questions addressed to her) and the media unequal treatment of the two actors. Beyond this particular occurrence, she was continuously asked to comment on her private life while he shared details of his professional projects and rarely mentioned Schneider.

Schneider and Delon's breakup in December 1963 was widely reported in media.[8] The overall – frenzied and detailed – account[9] of their separation depicted Schneider as a weepy and abandoned young woman on the verge of hysteria[10]. Here too she faced a double-standard: in accordance to her persona as part of a star couple, the break-up with Delon and his subsequent marriage with actress Nathalie Barthélemy were considered both a sacrifice and a failure for Schneider, but not for him. The gossip press alleged that she could not have a child, therefore the separation was a blessing in disguise for him[11],

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[8] During the shooting of *La Tulipe Noire* (Christian-Jacque, 1964) in the summer 1963 in Madrid, Delon and Nathalie Barthélemy (who did not star in the film but was staying with Delon in his villa) began their relationship. They married on 13th August 1964 and their son Anthony was born on 30th September 1964. They separated in 1968.

[9] It says (Schneider, Delon, and other sources have different recollection of the facts) that their friend and agent Georges Beaume went to Hollywood when Schneider was filming *Good Neighbour Sam* (David Swift, 1964) to deliver Delon's 20-page-long letter of rupture, and then she flew back to Paris to find a bouquet of red roses with a note that said, depending on the versions: 'I'm off to Mexico with Nathalie. A thousand things. Alain', or 'Romy-Schatz, I'm sorry'.

[10] 'Judy Garland and Romy Schneider: their nervous breakdowns (*Cinémonde*, 18/02/1964); 'Romy Schneider: She has been sleeping for a month to forget Alain Delon' (*Tempo*, 07/03/1964); 'Romy Schneider: I will always love Alain' (*Garbo*, 12/09/1964); 'Romy Schneider told Françoise Prévost what no actress had ever dared: "I have sacrificed the man I love"' (*Marie-Claire*, September 1964); 'Romy Schneider in loneliness hell' (*Cinémonde*, 06/10/1964); Seydel and Schneider, 1989, pp. 191-198.

[11] 'One night, Romy lost Alain by telling him the sad truth…' (*Noir et blanc*, 26/08/1964).

but an admission of defeat for her as he married his new fiancée who soon gave birth to their son: 'Nathalie, the little script-girl, succeeded where the sweet Sissi failed: she is Mrs Delon' (*Noir et blanc*, 26/08/1964).[12] The separation was met with derision in the German-speaking press that dismissed Schneider for her (alleged) arrogance and ingratitude towards the Germanic film industry and audiences: the rumours spread that she refused to star in German-speaking films or speak in her mother tongue to reporters (*Der Spiegel*, 25/12/1963, pp. 100-101). Her years spent in Paris with Delon were associated with sex and freedom, and her abandonment was seen as a deserved punishment. She later addressed these rumours, receiving reporters in her new home in Berlin-Grunewald where she met theatre director Harry Meyen (married at the time, then divorced, and married to Schneider in 1966), gave birth to their son David, and put her career on hold. The return to the conventional family model and a reconnection with her previous immaculate image of the decent girl from the *Sissi* films were positively received in media (Korte and Lowry, 2000, p. 125), but the prejudice linked to her reportedly looking down on her native cinema and audiences persisted – it would also later prove decisive in the reception of her image from her French films in 1970s German-speaking countries.

Conclusion

Romy Schneider's persona in the early 1960s was conflictual: media presented her as still attached to traditional moral standards yet yearning for defiance, transgression, and change. *Boccaccio '70* marked a definitive change towards a new erotic persona, but also a different trans-European stardom. She had already crossed borders in terms of reception but she was now doing so in terms of production. By working with Visconti, a filmmaker strongly associated with Europe in terms of production, source materials, and choice of actors, Schneider became identified with her capacity to embody several national representations without at the same time fully embracing one. In 'Il lavoro' she notably displays her (Western) trans-Europeanism through language: Pupe is an Austrian woman who speaks German, but also Italian, English, and French. Moreover, as in most Visconti films, 'Il lavoro' has a European literary foundation: the episode is an adaptation of Guy

[12] With hindsight, we also know that Delon had an affair (amongst others) with the singer Nico, and that their son Ari was born on 11th August 1962. The affair was kept secret and, to this day, Delon never recognised his paternity.

de Maupassant's short story *Au bord du lit* (1883), the husband Ottavio reads in French the novel *Les Gommes* by Alain Robbe-Grillet (1953), and there is a German copy of *Der Leopard* by Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa (*Il Gattopardo*, 1958) on Pupe's couch, Visconti's next film adaptation with Schneider's fiancé Delon. Through her work with Kortner, Clément, and Delon, her first stage experiences, and her partnership with Visconti (an aristocratic aesthete whose oeuvre invoked highbrow cultural references), Schneider's star image became associated with high culture, auteur cinema, and sophisticated eroticism, giving an alluring new singularity to a young star who already had a successful and well-defined 'first' career. These traits also promoted a cosmopolitan aspect that significantly would define the rest of her career, taking an international turn. After the critical success of her performance in *Boccaccio '70*, she worked in five European countries (Austria, France, West Germany, Italy, the UK) and in the US, and collaborated with European and American authors and directors in genres and languages (notably French and English) that were new to her, as I shall explore in the next chapter.

Chapter II. The International star

After the critical success of her performance in *Boccaccio '70*, Romy Schneider's next career phase took a global turn. Over the course of the 1960s she pursued her 'metamorphosis as a serious actress' (Hanck and Schröder, 1980) with a variety of roles in various genres of European art cinema, and went on to work in Hollywood productions. I start this chapter with Schneider's presence in European films, the majority of which are French or French-dominated co-productions (such as *Le Combat dans l'île* / *Fire and Ice*, Alain Cavalier, 1962, and *La Voleuse* / *The Thief*, Jean Chapot, 1966), and/or filmed in Paris (*The Trial*, Orson Welles, 1962). The second part focuses on her participation in US runaway productions that were filmed in Europe (*The Victors*, Carl Foreman, 1963; *The Cardinal*, Otto Preminger, 1963; and *Triple Cross*, Terence Young, 1966), and her roles in two Hollywood romantic comedies (*Good Neighbor Sam*, David Swift, 1964; *What's New Pussycat?*, Clive Donner, 1965). Traits that would permanently define her persona transpired during this liminal time despite the extremely diversified nature of her films – with, first, her internationalisation through multilingual performances. I follow Sabrina Yu's (2012) distinction between 'international' and 'transnational' stars; the former refers to 'a star who achieves international recognition and fame, even if he or she never makes a film outside his or her own country', while the latter is used to describe stars who 'physically transfer from one film industry to another to make films, often in a different language from his or her own' (pp. 1-2). In the films analysed in this chapter, Schneider fits the 'transnational' label as she speaks French and English, and her progress are traceable (her German accent was prominent at first, but attenuated fairly quickly); she also dubbed herself in the French, German, and English versions of her films. Another defining trait was the change undergone by her on-screen sexual identity and representation of female emancipation, which brings to the forth a subjacent question: to what extent did her film characters problematize representations of modern womanhood, and endorse patriarchal models?

1. Schneider's European art films

Schneider's first role after completing 'Il lavoro' was on European stages when theatre director Sacha Pitoëff gave her the role of aspiring actress Nina in his adaptation of *La Mouette* (*The Seagull*, 1896) by Anton Tchekhov for a five-month tour in France,

Switzerland, Belgium, and Luxembourg, that debuted in mid-January 1962. The role was previously held by Delphine Seyrig at the Théatre Moderne in Paris, but for a European tour the Karsenty-Herbert organisers decided to capitalise on Schneider's better-known name, her enduring Sissi image, and her European popularity. This choice apparently paid off as the tour was a great success (*Jours de France*, 12/06/1963, p. 61). To my knowledge, there are no video recordings of the play, only photographs that show Schneider in character, wearing a white, high-collar dress, her hair either up in a chignon with a fringe, or in a wig with locks cascading down her back with a big ribbon knotted in a half-ponytail. The photos depict her declaiming her text with her chin up, maintaining her straight posture (looking up, her chest open, shoulders down, arms open on her sides with the palm of her hands facing up). Her romantic composition of Nina, an idealistic young woman who longs for a stage career echoed Schneider's first German-speaking performances back in the mid-1950s, as did the aspects of her performance pointed out by the press – the natural and the simplicity of her acting. *Jours de France* read: 'To the elaborated, cerebral, and noble performance of Delphine Seyrig, Romy opposes a performance of trembling spontaneity, her asset is sincerity' (03/02/1962).

Although Schneider was based in Paris at the peak of the movement, she never participated in, nor was she identified as a star of the New Wave. However, she gravitated around the French film movement by working in two 'quasi-New Wave' films: *Le Combat dans l'île* and *La Voleuse*.[1] She shot *Le Combat dans l'île* in November 1961, before embarking on *The Seagull*'s European tour, but the political film came out months later in September 1962. It was the first feature of young French director Alain Cavalier, a former assistant of Louis Malle (his *Ascenseur pour l'échafaud* in 1958 is considered a precursor of the New Wave), who supervised the film. Although *Le Combat dans l'île* is

[1] I must here mention Schneider's participation in the first feature film of French director Guy Gilles, *L'Amour à la mer* (1964). Her scene was eventually cut but this romantic film might be assimilated to the New Wave in view of its formal experimentations, existentialist dialogues, and its behind the scene's youthful and good-natured spirit – Juliette Gréco lended her Parisian apartment in lieu of set, friends of Gilles had minor parts (Jean-Claude Brialy, Jean-Pierre Léaud, Sophie Daumier, Alain Delon). If the film echoes the early 1960s zeitgeist with themes such as insousciance, teenage and hesitant love relations, and the Algerian War as a backdrop, Schneider's perfomance as the 'vedette' (the star) resembles more of a cameo and she appears in the film in her everyday, off-screen and elegant day-time Chanel look – not exactly the incarnation of the more casually dressed New Wave star.

not considered part of the New Wave canon[2], it does share a similar aesthetic, notably in terms of black-and-white photography, naturalism and location shooting, with films of the movement such as *Moderato Cantabile* (Peter Brook, 1960), or *Jules et Jim* (François Truffaut, 1962), and it makes a clear reference to *À bout de souffle* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1960) with the use of the Hôtel de Suède location. *Le Combat dans l'île* was filmed in Paris and in Normandy, in the Moulin d'Andé and along the banks of the Seine. The Moulin d'Andé (a mill) was a location already seen in *Jules et Jim*, a film referenced also through the plot's love triangle, and the presence of actor Henri Serre.

Le Combat dans l'île is now one of Schneider's many forgotten films, yet her performance of her character's growth introduced French audiences to the type of women and of female sexuality for which the actress would become successful in 1970s France. She plays Anne, the wife of Clément (Jean-Louis Trintignant[3]), a right-wing extremist who fails a bazooka-attack on a Parisian member of parliament because of his accomplice's betrayal. Clément leaves Anne to hide with his friend Paul (Serre) and goes on a revenge mission. Anne and Paul fall in love, and she resumes her acting career on the Parisian stage, but when Clément returns he challenges Paul in a duel and dies. Made against the background of the French colonial war in Algeria, the film deals directly with political engagement by showing the contemporary French political climate. Clément is a racist, and, while it remains unnamed, his terrorist cell resembles the OAS ('Organisation Armée Secrète'), the right-wing secret army fighting against Algerian independence[4].

Apart from its political narrative, *Le Combat dans l'île* engages with complex gender relations. Anne stands at an existential crossroads, at the centre of a love triangle between two opposite depictions of masculinity (Clément is violent, jealous, possessive, and unstable; Paul is tender, supportive, and understanding). In the first part of the film,

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[2] Neither Michel Marie (2003), nor Richard Neupert (2007) include the film in their discussion, only Sellier (2008) briefly considers it in regard to her analysis of New Wave films displaying a 'nostalgia for a heroic masculinity' (pp. 139-141).

[3] The original draft manuscript of the script written by Cavalier and preserved at the Cinémathèque Française indicates that the filmmaker's first choice for the role was Alain Delon.

[4] Due to this sensitive reference, *Le Combat dans l'île*'s censorship approval was delayed, which explained the film's presentation on the side lines of the 1962 Cannes Film Festival, at the cinema rue d'Antibes and with a special authorisation (Benayoun, 1962a), and its late distribution in September 1962 (Sellier, 2008, p. 139).

Schneider represents female resilience and submission in the face of overwhelming patriarchal aggression: she is mistreated and violated by Clément who wants to control her; he slaps her, amongst other physical and verbal brutalities. He disapproves of 'women who behave badly', i.e. women who live in a modern, liberated way, which is precisely the path taken by Anne in the second part of the film when, in the absence of her husband, she falls in love with his friend. Therefore, in parallel with the political theme, *Le Combat dans l'île* is very much about its female protagonist's development towards independence. In that sense, Anne's femininity is comparable to other representations of women in early 1960s French cinema, particularly the paradoxical heroines of the New Wave who *appear* modern on the surface but are the result of misogyny (Vincendeau, 2000b, p. 120), especially in the way they are relentlessly reduced to their sexuality and their love life (Vincendeau, 2000b, pp. 110-135; Sellier, 2008, pp. 145-183). In the spectrum of New Wave women, Anne shares some characteristics with 'Mademoiselle Nouvelle Vague' (Cayatte, 1958; de Baecque, 1998, p. 75): she is young, idealistic and romantic ('I want to live, and you are destroying me!', she says to Clément), and the original draft manuscript of the script indicates that she is 'playful and cheerful'. However, even if Anne demonstrates a hunger for hedonistic pleasures (she likes Mozart, books, boat-party and champagne), the typical 'Mademoiselle Nouvelle Vague', as embodied by Anna Karina (*Vivre sa vie*, Jean-Luc Godard, 1962; *Bande à part*, Godard, 1964) and Jean Seberg (*À bout de souffle*), is more akin to a gamine figure (more romantic and less sexual), while Schneider and her character occupy a place closer to the chic and intellectual range developed by Jeanne Moreau in *Ascenseur pour l'échafaud* and *Jules et Jim* (see Vincendeau, 2000b, pp. 121-130; Sellier, 2008, pp. 184-198). *Le Combat dans l'île* takes place in a bourgeois (Clément and Anne's richly decorated flat and their Citroën DS) and intellectual milieu (Paul's publishing house), and Schneider, even if she is young (23 years old) performs a woman rather than a *jeune fille*, especially as she becomes pregnant. This is also construed through her behaviour and clothes that place her in a more 'grown-up', sophisticated idiom. Indeed, contrary to the 'sexed-up' presentations of her nude body in some of her post-Sissi films (with a sensual peak in 'Il lavoro'), Schneider's figure is here downplayed by classic and elegant costumes (black strap dress, large turtle-neck jumpers, trousers, large camel overcoat). As is the case for the New Wave women referenced above, Schneider's beauty and erotic appeal are subtler and mainly manifested through her face rather than her body, which is not much in evidence. For instance, after Trintignant's

departure, she wanders in a white nightgown in Paul's house, and with her soft voice and her natural brunette hair cut short she portrays fragile, ethereal beauty. Then, Anne progressively comes back to her joyous self: the oval shape and whiteness of Schneider's face is emphasised by a black turtle neck, strong and dark eyebrows, and the way she combs her hair back, revealing her forehead.

Notwithstanding her overt narrative emancipation, Schneider's character considerably lacks agency: her trajectory is from abject submission to a fascist ('Without you I am nothing, I do not exist') and his abusive behaviour, for which she seems to express fascination ('I am a bitch'), to becoming a muse for an artistic/bohemian and peaceful man. Even if Anne expresses her desire by carrying on an extra-marital love affair, she realises her need for self-realisation and professional emancipation only through the intervention of a man, Paul. After we see her lack of ambition (she says that she will do nothing), and encourages her to resume her stage career previously abandoned for Clément. Geneviève Sellier aptly describes the process: '[the film] makes the woman's emancipation depend on her encounter with a "positive" man, after her dependence on a man who alienates her. This is a curious way to describe emancipation, which indicates a persistent suspicion regarding women's capacity for autonomy' (2008, p. 141). Anne's trajectory goes even further in her contradictory representation of modernity: her newly found independence and ambition to work are compromised by maternity. Upon discovering her pregnancy, Anne wishes to have an abortion and Paul drives her to Geneva, but out of love for him she changes her mind. Schneider's character is therefore depicted paying for the consequences of her sexual freedom. Though the film remains open-ended (it closes on Anne and Paul's embrace once he had killed Clément), the assumption is that Anne may well accept the male-constructed responsibilities imposed onto her gender and opt for motherhood and domestic life over her career.

This interpretation was reinforced when the French-speaking press conflated the character with the star, unanimously praising her portrayal of a 'free woman'. Schneider herself insisted on the term 'modern woman' when she described Anne in interviews (France Roche, 1961), and the media linked her freedom to her 'self-awareness', her 'choice' to carry on with her pregnancy now that she has found the 'right man' (Sengissen, 1962). Schneider, like Anne, was described as 'revealed' (*Candide*, 07/09/1962; *L'Aurore*, 13/09/1962; Mardore, 1962) through the star's 'radiant femininity', making her an 'accomplished *comédienne*' (Benayoun, 1962b) because of the 'free choice' her character made on-screen. Schneider's feminine identity was

therefore still inscribed within traditional gender representations. Even though those New Wave's images may have appeared more tolerant to women's exploration and expression of sexual desire, they ultimately valued motherhood and romance, distancing once again Schneider from on-screen female emancipation.

Jean Chapot's directorial debut *La Voleuse* (1966) is another of Schneider's films that may be assimilated to New Wave aesthetics: black-and-white photography, a dreary urban décor (the straight lines and whiteness of the protagonist couple's intellectual, bourgeois flat in a modern apartment block in contrast with the factories, car parks, train station, wasteland), fragmented editing, and modernist music (reminiscent of *Hiroshima mon amour*, Alain Resnais, 1959). Furthermore, Marguerite Duras, the New Novelist whose work was associated with the New Wave, notably with her script for *Hiroshima mon amour* and her adaptation of her novel *Moderato Cantabile*, wrote the dialogues for *La Voleuse*. Focussing on the punishment of sexual emancipation and motherhood, the film is exemplary of Duras's long-standing interest in women's experience (see Hill, 1993). Set in West Germany (the film is a French-West German co-production), *La Voleuse* centres on Julia's (Schneider) torments when she steals back her young son (Mario Huth) whom she gave away in her teenage years while her husband (Michel Piccoli, in his first of many roles alongside Schneider) tries to persuade her that the couple who lovingly raised the child have the better claim. The boy's adoptive father (Hans Christian Blech) climbs on top of a smokestack and threatens to jump if Julia insists on keeping the child. The pre-credit sequence suggests that the film will focus on its female lead and sets up Julia's state of mind: Schneider stands in front of a white background and looks astray, she speaks but is inaudible under the discordant music. The tense and anxious atmosphere created by industrial landscapes of the Ruhr region photographed in black and white echoes Julia's predicament. Indeed, the film never considers the child, nor his adoptive mother, and instead stands out in its representation of a 'deranged' woman whose identity is entirely defined by dysfunctional motherhood, obsessive behaviour (Julia stalks her son's adoptive family), and her relationship to her husband; she is supposed to work, but the film never presents what she does. The viewer might even become alienated by Julia and feel sympathy for her husband who goes to such an extend to control her that he locks her into their apartment (to 'protect her and the child from [herself]'). As the voice of reason, he has the moral high ground over Schneider's character, and when Julia surrenders, Piccoli carrying the child in his arms appears on the last image of the film. *La Voleuse* can be read as stemming from a position of backlash

against women for their access to modernity – i.e. determining their own life, following their pleasure: Julia did what she wanted in her youth, having 'too many lovers', and chose to step away from motherhood. *La Voleuse*'s narrative goes against the law that supports its female lead, and instead offers the 'common sense morality'. Julia 'steals' the child (hence the film title), so even though she is the biological mother the narrative stands on the other family's side (the original German title relates to the child's father's desperate attempt: *Schornstein Nr. 4*, meaning 'Chimney No. 4'), as well as on her husband's side. Regarding the input of Marguerite Duras in this negative take on feminine modernity, biographer Laure Adler (1998) does not offer much insight. There is a streak in Duras's work in which she defended 'bad' mother figures as transgressive of patriarchal norm (see her infamous text 'Sublime, forcément sublime Christine V.', *Libération*, 17/05/1985), which suggests that there could have been a more sympathetic presentation of Schneider's character at the time she gave up the child. But Adler argues that the only 'transgression' here was in Duras's intervention as a screenwriter (the way she appropriated the story), not in the narrative *per se*, given that Chapot considered that his film's viewpoint was *still* too much oriented towards the female protagonist ('I wanted to show the thief and the abducted, she [Duras] dragged the film to the thief', quoted in Adler, p. 623).

Chapot's editing style consists of a series of short and fast-edited scenes without expository transitions, which strips away any affective elements in order to further enhance his star's performance. Schneider is on screen during the entire film, and her face, mostly framed in medium- and close-ups, draws all the attention. Her hairstyle, revealing her large forehead, and her pale makeup (pale lipstick) make her look older and distraught. Her performance style is, for the first time, extremely affected, and the choice of music adds to her tormented look. She appears to be languishing, as if every line (and there are not many), interspersed with long silences, was demanding a considerable effort. She constantly frowns, and her heavily made-up eyes throughout express a deep sorrow (fig. 9). She also bursts into violent episodes in which she throws her head in all directions, her short hair brushing off her face. Piccoli's character contains her, enveloping her in his arms (fig. 10). In this respect, *La Voleuse* begins to consolidate the tragic dimension of Schneider's star persona that was briefly introduced in *Girls in Uniform*, *Christine*, and *Le Combat dans l'île*. Her character is brittle, obsessive, melancholic, and self-centred. Although the film received mixed reviews from the French-speaking press, Schneider's performance was praised. In a similar way to her

work in *Le Combat dans l'île*, her representation of a dysfunctional (even potentially deadly) feminine identity was viewed as the evidence of her 'intelligence' as a performer (Rabine, 1966a). Because this film, like several other Schneider works in the 1960s, failed commercially, her career evolution into a European auteur cinema's star was largely ignored by audiences. At the time, she was a young mother living with her husband Harry Meyen and her baby son David in the posh suburb of Berlin-Grunewald, and her film career was on hold, so she was not much present in media in either West Germany or France.

Fig. 9. Romy Schneider and Michel Piccoli in *La Voleuse* (1966).

Fig. 10. Schneider's violent outbursts in *La Voleuse*.

2. International co-productions

Having examined Schneider's roles in two films that both illustrate ideological tensions in the representation of women in early 1960s European auteur cinema, and confirm her emerging 'tragic' persona, I wish to turn to a group of films that evidence Schneider's internationalisation.

At the beginning of 1962, Schneider performed in *The Trial* (1962). The film, written and directed by Orson Welles, adapts the 1925 eponymous novel (*Der Proceß* in the original German title) by Franz Kafka. The black-and-white production is French, West German, and Italian; the cast is international (with American, French, German, and Italian actors); and the film was shot in Rome, Milan, Yugoslavia, and Paris, at the then-abandoned Orsay station. Set in modern times and narrated by Welles, *The Trial* recounts the misadventures of Joseph K (Anthony Perkins), an ordinary man arrested, judged, and condemned to death for an unspecified crime in an unnamed authoritarian country. Though innocent, Joseph K begins to feel a sense of guilt. Schneider plays Leni, the servant, nurse, and mistress of the Advocate Albert Hastler, performed by Welles. The film received polarised reviews in France and English-speaking countries, but the French press unanimously acclaimed Schneider's performance. Being confined to a supporting role in a vast cast of characters, Leni's identity and personality are not particularly developed in the film. Therefore, and like the other major female characters in the film (played by Jeanne Moreau and Elsa Martinelli), she is essentially defined by her sexuality and solely intervenes in the narrative through seductive acts. Schneider is paired with Perkins who was a few years older than her, but Leni has two other and older lovers – the bedridden Advocate, and Bloch (Akim Tamiroff), one of the Advocate's clients whose trial drags in length.

She wears a white nurse overall in a sexy way (the knee-length blouse is tight with a belt and unbuttoned at the top in a plunging V-collar neck, similar to Brigitte Bardot's work overall in *Et Dieu… créa la femme*), a thin golden chain, and her short brunette hair is styled with curly locks down her neck and around her face. Her forehead is clear (no fringe), a detail that impacted her look by revealing further her face and drawing attention to her eyes. I have examined in previous chapters how Schneider's body was gradually revealed in films such as 'Il lavoro', which 'modernised' her erotic aura. I also pointed out how her face and her eyes, captured in close-ups, participated in building her on-screen sensuality. Her performance in *The Trial* pursued in that direction. Her eyes are the first thing we see of Leni when a peephole opens, and, as in *Le Combat dans l'île*, her

eyebrows are thickened and lengthened by makeup, emphasising her gaze. Her familiar 'œillade' comes also into play in the film: while Joseph K's uncle talks to the Advocate, Leni casts insistent glances at K to attract his attention. Then she slowly walks out of the room, but stops regularly to make sure K is following her by seductively casting side glances towards him above her shoulder. The Advocate explains that his nurse has a predilection for his clients, specifically the accused with whom she falls in love. Performing a character overtly unapologetic about her sexual desire, Schneider is constructed as desirable by Welles's camera. In a large and dark room, she lies down on a mountainous pile of dossiers spilling over an entire room and presents her face to Perkins to kiss; they embrace and she drives him down the mound of files and papers. Perkins was a tall man and she had to raise her chin, enhancing her square jawline (fig. 11); she pushed that movement even further by tilting her head way back to expose her throat while putting her arms around Perkins's and Bloch's shoulders. Leni represents a moment of levity and truce for Joseph K in the grim general ambience but like the other female characters, she illustrates a version of anxiety – her gentleness and compassion are a source of guilt for K. She also applies lotion on Welles's torso, their two faces are very close to one another, and her smirk and assured gestures of care create a connivance between the two characters (fig. 12). He slaps her on the buttocks when she is done and she reacts with a smile. Schneider's coy smile, accompanied by the 'œillade', recalls previous playful roles (see Part I): those facial expressions cultivate a sense of charm and childish tenderness (a reporter called it 'her impudence', *L'Est Républicain*, 28/12/1962) but also of calculation and ambiguity. Schneider's construction of sensuality did not depend on her naked body, she used eyes and head movements to create a seductive allure. Leni wants sex and is shown as 'easy'. However, Schneider's acting and star persona bring class and a certain mystery to the character, an elusiveness that renders Leni alluring and avoids falling into vulgarity.

The Trial was released in cinemas a few months after *Le Combat dans l'île* and the press again praised Schneider's performance, confirming the critics' assessment that they were witnessing a 'transformation', and yet they still systematically referred to Sissi. Jean de Baroncelli in *Le Monde* (1962) wrote: 'It is definitely time to forget the *Sissi*s and to give this actress a place worthy of her talent'. For Henry Rabine in *La Croix* (1963): '[She] confirms her performance in *Boccaccio '70*. Doubt is no longer permitted: the late Sissi is a great actress. So much better, she is pretty'. Acclaiming Schneider's acting in her 1960s films by using a language that favourably contrasts her present skills to her past

work thus maintained the cultural prejudice against the *Sissi*s and Schneider's previous work in popular cinema. I shall further explore in the second part of this chapter how Schneider responded to this elitist rhetoric. Others were also prompt to notice how her subtle acting skills were beneficial for what was viewed at the time as a depiction of complex femininity ('[T]his actress seems to be promised to roles that would further enhance the psychological resources of femininity', Lovet, 1963), a type of femininity that was extoled as a singularity but that fundamentally betrayed the misogynist foundations of a male-constructed concept of womanhood deeply rooted in a patriarchal culture that equated femininity with sexuality.

The French-speaking press was also undivided in its assessment that Schneider distinguished herself from the other European actresses in *The Trial*. Amongst them she was often compared to Jeanne Moreau. Leaving aside the fact that Moreau was ten years older than Schneider (respectively 34 and 23 at the time of filming) and historically articulated a different type of femininity, critics praised Schneider's perennial 'sweetness' to Moreau's 'harshness' and mature look. This ageist evaluation of Schneider's romantic femininity was based on her looks in the film: because her forehead was uncovered it was described as 'honest', her 'white neck' was soft, and her eyes were 'gay' (*Paris-Press-L'Intransigeant*, 30/12/1962; Capdenac, 1963). Thus, regardless of her move towards art cinema, Schneider's filmic persona retained some traces of the ingénue and a youthful mischievousness dominated her version of sexiness – especially when seen in contrast to Moreau's 'tired' femme fatale (which Leni's dialogue defines as 'old'), and Martinelli's cool elegance. Media discourses applauded Welles's directing for the success of her performance as well as, again, the beneficial impact of Delon's love on his fiancé's beauty. Nonetheless, the star's own agency was slightly more in evidence compared to the critical reception of 'Il lavoro': progressively, the recognition of her acting skills provided her with a certain legitimacy and accomplishment. Welles's own comments were reported: 'Romy is the best actress of her generation. She soon will be the greatest' (*Paris-Presse-L'Intransigeant*, 31/05/1962).

Working with Welles brought Schneider international recognition and her international career expanded even further with a stay in Hollywood and several roles in US films (examined later). In June 1963, Schneider received an 'Etoile de Cristal de l'Académie du Cinéma' (as best foreign actress) for her performance in *The Trial*.

Fig. 11. Schneider's upturned face in *The Trial* (1962).

Fig. 12. Schneider and Orson Welles in *The Trial*.

Schneider's performance as Leni impacted for years the types of women she played on screen: sex-driven women who *appear* elusive, superior, in control of their body and desire. The actress's green and cat-like eyes accentuated by makeup, as we saw, were key in composing her elusiveness. Her 'œillade' and long static stare carried a pointed knowingness and confidence in her sensual power. The roles of Claire and Imogen in respectively *10.30 pm Summer* (Jules Dassin, 1966) and *Otley* (Dick Clement, 1969) are significant in that regard. In *10.30 pm Summer*, Schneider interprets Claire, a

young woman who accompanies a couple of friends (played by Melina Mercouri and Peter Finch) and their child (Isabel María Pérez) in a road-trip through Spain. The film, shot on location, is an international co-production (Spain, US, France), with a script co-written by Marguerite Duras from her eponymous novel, and an international cast and crew (Dassin was an American working in France at the time, Mercouri was Greek, Peter Finch was an English-born Australian). In this ménage à trois, Maria (Mercouri) and Claire share a tacit agreement: the latter knows that the former wants her to seduce and have an affair with her husband. Schneider is both the younger rival and the friendly and caring accomplice, her character is a tool in the narrative, and her body is therefore visually exploited for erotic purposes. The mise-en-scène enhances Schneider's looks in the film: she wears costumes of bright and intense colours (an electric blue A-shape knee-length dress and an orange pants-ensemble with a silk headband) on her tanned skin, which emphasise her green eyes and the coral makeup of her lips, her hair is perfectly coiffed, clearing her face (fig. 13). Facing the lassitude and declining sexual powers of the more mature Mercouri's character, Schneider is the personification of youth, beauty, and temptation. Mercouri nevertheless offers a flamboyant performance as a woman who realises that there is no love left in her marriage, and who drowns her sorrow in alcohol. Schneider's performance is more subdued. She stands still and quiet, her face and body barely move, and she scarcely speaks. She displays an innocence and a youthfulness that make her character the object of desire of the husband, the friend of the wife and of the couple's daughter – almost as if she was another child.

Fig. 13. Schneider in *10.30 pm Summer* (1966).

Schneider's supporting role in the British spy comedy *Otley* (1969), filmed in London by Dick Clement in his directorial debut, is also that of an accessory. She plays Imogen, a foreign agent working for British Intelligence, who pops up here and there to help the title character (Tom Courtenay) to sort out the imbroglio of murder and espionage into which he has fallen. They become romantically involved along the way. The film features a range of fantastic situations (abduction, car chase) in famous London locations (Portobello Road, Cheyne Walk, Buckingham Palace). Schneider's costumes follow the fashionable Swinging London look of the late 1960s (Street, 2009, pp. 97-98): a fluid white dress with a plunging and neckline in silver sequin, a large fur coat, a mini-skirt with high boots, a pantsuit with a white turtle neck, a crimson red skirt-suit with golden buttons and black vinyl leggings. Her clothes, hairstyle (a long bob haircut with a fringe), and makeup (black eye-shadow, contoured cheeks, glossy lips) are modern but never provocative. Schneider's participation in *Otley* illustrates a stereotypical appropriation of her trans-European image, especially in the British context. She represents the sexually alluring European woman, a fantasy site of glamour and non-marital sex. Despite the absence of explicit erotic moments between Imogen and Otley, the young woman is confident in her seductive power and affirms straight off her sexual desire. Towards the end of the film, she enters Otley's room and suggests they have sex: she lies down on the bed and puts her legs clad in high black vinyl boots on Courtenay's lap. Schneider's Imogen is a legacy of the complex figure of the European woman in the late 1940s/early 1950s British films (Geraghty, 2000, pp. 93-111)[5], for which an apt comparison is Hildegard Knef's Bettina in *The Man Between* (Carol Reed, 1953). As elusive and 'exotic' European figures, they both protect and inform the male protagonist (their mysterious pasts credit them with knowledge and experience) and they carry an air of authority and control. Schneider's performance is sober: her voice is soft with a calm intonation, and she adopts the air of class confidence that she displayed in Visconti's 'Il lavoro' (flared nostrils, ironic smile, chin up, and straight posture). Similar to Knef, by smiling and making direct and sustained eye contact, Schneider crafted an undeniable sexual aura. This was strengthened by the myth of European society's sexual

[5] At the time, the European woman's 'ambiguities and dilemmas come to represent those of Europe itself and the relationship between her and the protagonist parallels Britain's relationship with Europe' (Geraghty, 2000, p. 103). The figure's maturity and political and sexual knowledge duplicated the complex politics of Europe's past.

permissiveness of the 1960s that influenced films' gender dynamics: while the European woman of the 1940s-1950s was 'willing to love unreservedly and sacrifice her own interests for the male hero' (Geraghty, p. 104), Imogen at the end of the film turns down Otley's date proposal and goes on her way without looking back, turning down prospects of romance or marriage. Instead, Schneider's character embraces an aspect of modern womanhood typical of Swinging London films – mobility (Landy, 2010). Imogen is a former au pair who exiled herself by choice (her national identity is left ambiguous), which suggests subjectivity and agency (Luckett, 2000, p. 236). Furthermore, Schneider had by then made tremendous progress in English and her accent was difficult to place (and it was not distinctly Germanic)[6], increasing her alluring image of the elegant, seductive, and sophisticated European woman, a figure highly exportable on foreign screens, especially in English-speaking films, as I shall further develop in the second part of this chapter. Despite the failure at the box office of *10.30pm Summer* and *Otley* (the latter was never released in France), her roles in these two films is instructive to a study of her star persona, as they progressively built up her on-screen sensuality and confidence (in this, they also paved the way for her momentous portrayal of Marianne in *La Piscine*). These two films also introduced a more international dimension to her career, something that would find a logical outcome in her move to Hollywood.

But before moving on to Schneider's US productions, it is opportune to briefly mention *L'Enfer* / *Inferno* (Henri-Georges Clouzot, 1964), an international film that was meant to be visually revolutionary (with many innovative lighting and editing techniques), but was shut down after three weeks of filming in July 1964 due to the lead actor's (Serge Reggiani) and the director's health issues, and was never completed.[7] US producers from Columbia, notably Carl Foreman, with whom Schneider worked on *The Victors* (1963) took interest in the project and allocated it an unlimited budget. Schneider was still under contract with the production company at the time (see below) and it is very

[6] Her Austrian background and thus the softer version of German that she speaks (which is not high German nor constrained by a strong Austrian dialect/accent) is enabling rather than constraining in learning to speak English and almost omitting her accent. A counter-example would be Arnold Schwarzenegger who comes from a region in Austria that speaks a very pronounced, unique and intense type of dialect that reflects on vocal expression and pronunciation and is hard to mask, especially when speaking another language.

[7] In 2009 the film was presented as a full-length semi-documentary by Serge Bromberg and Ruxandra Medrea with material selected from 15 hours of archival material and entitled *L'Enfer d'Henri-Georges Clouzot*. The film includes interviews with members of the cast and crew.

likely that she played a part, if not in securing the capital, at least in bringing parties together. As we saw, by the spring and summer of 1964, she had an international art cinema reputation (having worked with Visconti, Preminger, and Welles), but she was at a transitional stage, still trying to shed the Sissi image and acquire a reputation as a serious actress. She therefore had high expectations from her role in Clouzot's film in terms of what it could bring to her image. In a similar way, she had expressed an interest in working with Claude Autant-Lara at the end of 1959[8]. Both directors were credited for 'raising' Brigitte Bardot to the rank of serious actress (Autant-Lara with *En cas de malheur* in 1958 and Clouzot with *La Vérité* in 1960, which may have been on Schneider's mind in this respect, as she and Bardot had the same agent at the time). Similar to *Le Combat dans l'île*, *L'Enfer* depicts the paranoiac jealousy of hotelier Marcel (Reggiani) towards his wife Odette (Schneider). The film was shot partly in black and white, with Marcel's obsession visually translated onto the screen in the form of lurid visions shot in colours. Amongst other lightning and makeup experiments, Schneider's lips were painted blue, her face, hair, and body were covered with olive oil and glitter, while rotating lighting rigs were placed in front of the camera and actors. The final effect created the illusion of their faces transitioning between emotions and personalities. In view of the film's screen tests and first rushes released in the 2009 documentary *L'Enfer d'Henri-Georges Clouzot* (Serge Bromberg and Ruxandra Medrea), in those hallucinations Schneider embodied a highly sexualised male fantasy, an inaccessible and poisonous beauty, confirming the growing sexualisation of her on-screen persona.

3. The Hollywood attempt

Through her association with Visconti, Schneider was offered work with established and critically-acclaimed directors (Orson Welles as we saw, Otto Preminger). She worked both *on* Hollywood films shot in Europe and made films *in* Hollywood, a career path followed by many European actors in cinema history (see Lebrun, 1987, 1992; Barnier and Moine, 2002; Phillips and Vincendeau, 2006) and 'the ultimate recognition for a star, in any case a female star' (Sellier, 2002, p. 204). She signed a seven-year contract with Columbia Pictures for seven films (Bonini, 2001, p. 23). Yet, this section is called 'the Hollywood *attempt*', for Schneider belonged to the ongoing trend of European actors who

[8] As attested by a telegram sent by Schneider's agent Olga Horstig to Autant-Lara and kept at the Fonds Autant-Lara (archives) at the Cinémathèque suisse in Lausanne.

were major stars in their own countries and/or across the continent, traversed the Atlantic but ultimately failed to make a mark in Hollywood – other examples include prominent names such as Hildegarde Knef (who had nonetheless a successful career on Broadway), Italian stars Isa Miranda and Marcello Mastroianni, French stars Jean Gabin, Emmanuelle Béart, and Delon[9] (see Vincendeau, 2014). Schneider made three films out of the seven planned by Columbia (*The Victors*, *The Cardinal*, *Good Neighbor Sam*), only one of which (*Good Neighbor Sam*) was filmed *on* Hollywood grounds, and she stayed in Beverly Hills only a few months at the end of 1963. She ended up breaking her contract, returned first to Paris, and then settled with her new family in Berlin.

Except for *The Cardinal* (Otto Preminger, 1963), none of Schneider's Hollywood films had any major impact critically or at the box office. Therefore, her attempt at a Hollywood career remained, to a large extent, unknown to her European public today. This is a key point to consider in explaining the absence of success of Schneider with Anglophone audiences. The importance of her screen time and roles in those films considerably varied, but she was on the whole overshadowed by her male American and British co-star(s) and reduced to playing incidental roles that served to highlight the masculine protagonists in male genres such as the war film (*The Victors*, *Triple Cross*, to some extent *The Cardinal*), spy film (*Triple Cross*), and comedy (*What's New Pussycat?*, *Good Neighbor Sam*). The lesser importance of her parts led to the over-simplification of her characters, which in turn prevented her from deploying her acting skills. All of these factors led to the diverse critical reception of her work in the US, at home in West Germany and Austria, and in France.

Schneider's failure to achieve international stardom through her short-lived Hollywood career related to some extent to the struggles she had in transferring her star persona. On the one hand, the latter was still within her transition from the Sissi character to the sophisticated woman of her European art films and, on the other, they were at odds with Hollywood genres. Schneider's representation in those Hollywood films veered between the beautiful and 'exotic' creature, the whore, the schemer, and the nagging *bourgeoise*. She was mainly defined by 'her otherness' (as opposed to the hegemonic white, male, and Western culture of Hollywood – in this sense fitting within Diane Negra's category of 'off-white Hollywood', 2001) and the fact that she was of foreign

[9] They ended their relationship during her stay in Los Angeles and Delon will have his own attempt at a Hollywood career shortly after their separation.

nationality, an unusualness that was considered exciting. Schneider's Hollywood films can be divided into two categories: the runaway productions with which I will begin, and then the comedies.

3.1. The big runaway productions

Schneider's first experience with Hollywood was in the British-American, black-and-white war film *The Victors* (1963) that follows a group of US soldiers through Europe during World War II, through fighting in Italy and France, to the uneasy peace of Berlin. The film was written, directed and produced by Carl Foreman from the novel *The Human Kind* (1953) by British author Alexander Baron. The novel is a collection of short stories based on the author's own wartime experiences, some of which were selected by Foreman who developed them, added his own observations, and changed the original British characters into Americans to attract US audiences. *The Victors* was shot on location in 1962 Sweden, France, Italy, Belgium and England, and features an ensemble cast of 15 American and European actors, including six European actresses (apart from Schneider, Melina Mercouri, Jeanne Moreau, Rosanna Schiaffino, Senta Berger and Elke Sommer). Their photographs appear on the original poster with the tagline 'The six most exciting women in the world… in the most explosive entertainment ever made!'. The film is a good illustration of a brief moment in the history of US cinema when, in the 1960s, the studio era drew to a close and Hollywood expanded and varied its overseas productions, especially in Europe (Betz, 2009, p. 64). European actors, as illustrated by Schneider, started working on international projects on a more fluid and temporary basis, appearing in English-language films largely financed by Hollywood but shot in Europe (the so-called 'runaway productions'). As a case in point, the actresses of *The Victors* were selected to represent an American view of Europe: a foreign place populated by beautiful women on the margins of the codes of feminine morality 'made in Hollywood'.

In her Hollywood films, Schneider's characters are explicitly foreign, a frequent narrative explanation for her slight accent, but, except for *The Cardinal*, no further precision is provided (a common feature for European actors/actresses in Hollywood) – she could be French, German, Austrian, Swiss, or Swedish. In her two scenes in *The Victors* Schneider is Regine, a violinist who entertains the GIs in a bar in Oostende. It is a minor, under-developed part, but there are details brought through Schneider's performance that hint at the character's complexity. Regine is evidently distressed by the horrors of the war that killed her family, and Schneider performs her through expressing

depression, resignation, and gloominess (head down, a closed expression on her face, she speaks only a few laconic and monosyllabic words) when Georges Hamilton's character invites her to his table. But when he returns a month later he is deeply disappointed to see that Regine had become a laughing and seducing escort in a black lace dress. This transition is surprising for the spectator too: Schneider's character lacks such basic narrative exposition and agency (for instance, the male characters talk about her in crude terms as if she was not sitting right next to them, powdering her nose) that it is difficult to feel empathy towards her; her role as escort also inhabits a space far from Schneider's usual star persona. Unsurprisingly critics deemed her 'schizophrenic' (Crowther, 1963).

Schneider had a better fleshed-out character as the young Viennese Annemarie in Otto Preminger's *The Cardinal* (1963) on which I will dwell a little more. Schneider appears half-way through the film's lengthy 2h48-running time, in the segments taking place in Vienna.[10] Based on the eponymous novel (1950) by Henry Morton Robinson, *The Cardinal* is a large-scale drama shot on location in Boston, Connecticut, Hollywood, Rome, and Vienna. It features an international cast, with Tom Tryon as the title character, John Huston, Raf Vallone, and Dorothy Gish, and it received six Academy Awards nominations and six Golden Globe Awards nominations in 1964 (including Best actress in a drama for Schneider), winning two (Best drama and Best supporting actor for Huston). Beginning in 1917, the film recounts the fictional life of young Irish-American Catholic priest Stephen Fermoyle (Tryon) from Boston who confronts family issues and personal conflicts as he rises to the office of cardinal, touching on various social issues such as interfaith marriage, sex out of wedlock, abortion, racial bigotry, and the rise of fascism and war with the *Anschluss* in Vienna in 1938.

Following the death of his sister (Carol Lynley) after he denied a doctor the right to perform the abortion that would have saved her life, Fermoyle becomes unsure about his commitment to the clergy and is transferred to Europe where he takes a two-year sabbatical. In 1924 in Vienna he teaches an English class and enters into a relationship with one of his student, Annemarie (Schneider). Schneider plays the character with the optimism and freshness displayed in *Sissi*. Dressed in a mid-length skirt and a Peter Pan

[10] The Vienna-based parts of the narrative are very much a 'Who's Who' of Austrian cinema at the time: Josef Meinrad, seen as Colonel Böckl in the *Sissi* films; Peter Weck, seen alongside Schneider in *Mädchenjahre einer Königin* and *Sissi 1* and *2*; and Vilma Degischer, famous for her role of Archduchess Sophie in the *Sissi*s, are all in *The Cardinal*.

collar shirt, she is made to look younger as she follows her professor in the streets of Vienna, while a romantic violin tune accompanies her light step. Annemarie is a modern girl (she dreams of going to America 'where people think about the future instead of always the past'): enterprising, flirting, cheeky (she implies to her teacher that she is free to talk all afternoon even 'an evening if needed', and she asks him to invite her for a cup of coffee). She pushes herself into Fermoyle's life and delights him with tourist attractions – some of them are well known from the *Sissi* films: Schönbrunn Palace and its Gloriette in the gardens, and a boat trip on the Danube. This décor and Annemarie's bubbly personality recall many Schneider's 1950s roles, as does the film's conservative view of femininity and its traditional assignment of gender roles. Annemarie may display an acute and modern sense of fashion, she remains fundamentally attached to what is expected of her as a traditional young woman: 'For me, to work at a job, that is not to be a woman. I think… there is one thing I could do well, one thing I was born for… to love a man. To love him so much that my whole life is to make him happy'. While the film's historical context (1924 Vienna) may go some way to explaining this outdated dialogue, its blatant conservatism also relates to Schneider's late 1950s/early 1960s persona with its paradoxical depiction of femininity, and in particular the tension between modernity and tradition examined in Part I. Although some aspects of Annemarie spoke of a modern feminine identity endowed with some power of self-determination (which aligned with the star's new and international career path), her image in the film was representative of a conventional bourgeois femininity more in tune with her former roles and supported by the rigid doctrine of the Catholic Church figured by Tyron's character (although *The Cardinal* was vehemently condemned by the Vatican).

Annemarie evolves from young student to charming and passionate woman, and finally abandoned woman. Schneider's performance of the character's three narrative stages is constructed through acting signs that audiences already witnessed in her collaborations with Visconti and Welles. First, she plays the young woman in love with her usual acting combination of coy smile and impish side glance. After Fermoyle tells Annemarie about his priesthood, she does not hide her romantic intentions anymore and they express their love for each other at one of the most iconic sites in Vienna, a ball (emphasising her role as Austrian 'ambassador' in the film). Schneider's face is captured in close-up while she tells her love for Fermoyle: her expression is tense and serious, then she comforts him in a soft voice, and they waltz away. Ultimately, Fermoyle does not renounce his vows and Schneider, dressed in a bright red ensemble, glimpses him in his

cassock, displays an expression of mild bewilderment (her mouth slightly open), betrayal (frown eyebrows), and deep sadness (watering eyes), but does not speak a word, turns, and runs away (fig. 14).

She reappears in the last act of the film when Fermoyle is sent back to Vienna by the Vatican in 1938 to persuade Cardinal Innitzer (Josef Meinrad) not to cooperate with the Nazis. Annemarie is married to Kurt von Hartman (Peter Weck) who commits suicide out of fear of the Gestapo because of his Jewish parentage; then the Nazis turn to her and she is imprisoned. Behind bars, her hair loose and her face clear, surrounded by tall men, Annemarie reflects on her mistakes and regrets. Schneider's facial expressions harden to present a contemptuous and disenchanted face (obtained with her habit of raising her chin and pursing her lips) that ultimately presents all the signs of distress (tears, looking down, frowning). The camera closes up on her face framed by the prison bars and with minimal makeup, and despite the severity of the situation, the tone of her voice remains firm, even when she sadly looks down, resigned, and her eyes progressively fill with tears. Her clear-eyed glance is steady, proud, and insistent; she flares her nostrils with disdain and there is ardour in her tone (the way she insists on some syllable, like the [u] sound in 'fool'). The scene is an excellent example of an aspect of her acting style that would soon become characteristic: she delivers long lines of dialogue, taking her time delivering her words and refusing to be interrupted by her interlocutor (fig. 15), which contributed to her image as a proud (almost arrogant) woman, while she also demonstrates how she could span a wide emotional range, from sneering to supplication to melancholy.

And yet, despite the Golden Globe nomination and the film's box office success in the US and France[11], the legacy of the demure Sissi was persistent (*Libération*, 01/01/1964). Therefore, even with a challenging role like Annemarie, the European media were quick to link Schneider back to the romantic Sissi image (Chauvet, 1963). Even if Schneider made the protagonist question his priesthood – she was the female 'temptation' (Landes, 1963; *L'Aurore*, 26/12/1963; *La Croix*, 31/12/1963) – the relationship remained sexually repressed and unconsummated. Therefore, though Schneider in *The Cardinal* did not represent absolute vice (the European temptress who embodied a dangerous deviation from US patriarchal norms), her ultimate arrest is portrayed as a punishment for her vanity as a young woman and her lack of love for her

[11] The film ranked 11th at the 1963 French box office with 2,520,006 spectators (Simsi, 2012, p. 28). I could not find box office numbers for West Germany and Austria.

husband, which fitted the time's rhetoric of traditional gender roles and pursuit of fantasies of women's domestic roles in the private sphere, at least until the mid-1960s (when it began to be questioned, as signalled by the 1963 publication of *The Feminine Mystique* by Betty Friedan).

Fig. 14. Schneider's performance of the betrayed young woman in love in *The Cardinal* (1963).

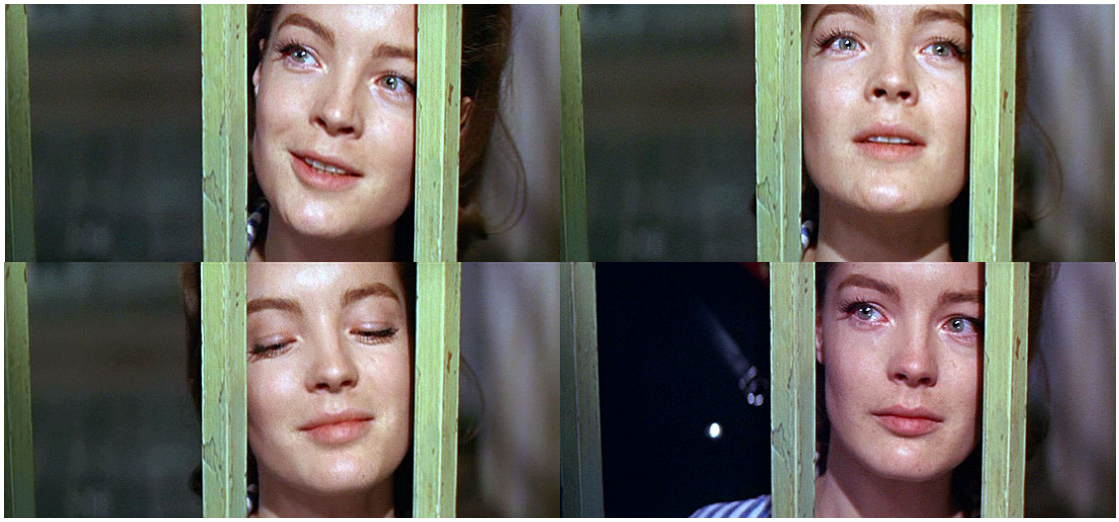

Fig. 15. Schneider's proud tirade in *The Cardinal*.

The Victors and *The Cardinal* were Schneider's first films that were, entirely for the former, and partially for the latter, set during World War II and she continued her identification with the war period with the 1966 spy film *Triple Cross* (by *James Bond* director Terence Young). Her character, who goes by the vague title of 'Countess', is the first and only one to side deliberately with the Nazi regime. In this respect, the 1960s represented a decade of new on- and off-screen awareness for Schneider: she learned about her family's past sympathy for some of the Nazi party's elite and disapproved of their silence subsequently. Being acquainted with Marlene Dietrich, Lili Palmer and Otto Preminger, who took a stand against the fascist regime, Schneider progressively realised

her parents' failure to take anti-Nazi positions and developed an acute sense of guilt and shame. The Countess in *Triple Cross* remained therefore an exception in her filmography. The film is a fictional account of an episode in the real-life English spy Eddie Chapman (performed by Christopher Plummer), believed by the Nazis to be their top spy in Great Britain, though he was a double agent. There is scant feminine presence in the film and Schneider is marginal in a male-dominated cast. Her character is a fellow spy who interviews Chapman and participates in his training during which they become romantically involved. With her accent, her nationality and her early image as Austria's national treasure Schneider represents the stereotype of the 'German enemy' (although the Countess's nationality is not defined), which cinematically translates as the trope of the European femme fatale, a woman of mystery and dubious sexual intent (Philips and Vincendeau, 2006, p. 268). The Countess has a high opinion of herself and is unapologetic about her work – much like Chapman, she sees to her own interests first. Her demise is nonetheless unavoidable at the end of the war (and of the film), and she accepts it with pride and a few resigned tears. Elegantly dressed in blocks of colour (blue, green, salmon, black), carefully coiffed and made-up, her look is more reminiscent of 1960s aesthetics than 1940s fashion and it is construed as the image of the sophisticated (the term 'Countess' hints at her aristocracy), cold and calculating enemy spy. In this respect she contrasts with the French actress Claudine Auger (Bond girl Domino in Young's previous Bond film *Thunderball* in 1965), who plays the 'good woman' as a member of the Resistance.

During the filming of *Triple Cross* in the summer of 1966 in the studios de la Victorine in Nice, she married her first husband, German stage actor and director Harry Meyen who survived his incarceration at the age of 18 in the Neuengamme concentration camp, and whose father was murdered by the Nazis. Meyen and Schneider, who was five-month pregnant with her son, discretely wedded in Saint-Jean-Cap-Ferrat on 15th July 1966, a day after the highly publicised wedding between Brigitte Bardot and Gunter Sachs in Las Vegas. Schneider gave birth (in Berlin) a few days before the film's release in early December 1966 in Paris. *Triple Cross* performed modestly at the box office. It was distributed in the US in July 1967, but Schneider had already put her career on hold to dedicate herself to her son. But before examining her highly successful return to the (French) screen with *La Piscine*, I shall examine how Schneider's performance register shifted temporarily towards comedy during her Hollywood years. For this I need to go back a few years.

3.2. The first comedies

Good Neighbor Sam (David Swift, 1964), filmed during autumn 1963, was Schneider's first actual comedy (as opposed to some comic episodes in her 1950s romantic films) and the only film she filmed in California. Schneider's arrival in Hollywood was advertised in the US media as that of an 'exotic' European woman coming to lighten up productions with her charm and beauty. In *Anatomy of a movie: The Cardinal* (Jack Haley Jr.), the 19th episode of the NBC television series *Hollywood and the stars*, released in February 1964 and documenting the making of *The Cardinal*, Schneider is all smiles, elegantly dressed in a Chanel suit with a leopard-print pillbox hat matching her fur collar, and she kisses Preminger on the mouth (a kiss 'to help the director' in Boston's cold winter, says the narrator).[12] Her 'exoticism' was emphasised as a paramount aspect of her image: we hear that 'she has come all this way [from Europe]' and she herself adds 'I was born in a cold country'. However, like many mentions of Schneider in the mainstream press, her birthplace was rarely specified, instead it was implied through clichés of Viennese romanticism: her appearance is accompanied by a violin tune reminiscent of the music in the *Sissi*s, and her scene chosen from *The Cardinal* is the Viennese ball scene. Schneider's presence in Hollywood was therefore one of many examples of the hegemonic film industry's strategy to uplift its domestic productions by incorporating European 'otherness' via national and gender stereotypes. Those, by contrast to the American (female) characters, developed and cemented the fundamentals of North-American identity (Abel, 1999). This is well illustrated by Schneider's looks and performance in *Good Neighbor Sam,* compared to the blue-eyed, blonde, and high-pitched Dorothy Provine in the role of the all-American and loving wife and mother.

In this comedy of manners, Schneider plays Janet Lagerlof, the recently divorced, long-time friend from Europe and new next-door neighbour of Min (Provine) whose husband Sam (Jack Lemmon) works in advertising in San Francisco. After all sorts of

[12] Given Preminger's brutal and well-documented treatment of Jean Seberg on his films *Saint Joan* (1957) and *Bonjour Tristesse* (1958) (Fujiwara, 2008, pp. 202-214), one could wonder about his and Schneider's work relationship. Apparently, it was relatively harmonious despite her recollection of the terror felt by the cast and crew during the shooting in Vienna (p. 306). Her presence on set felt liberating for Tom Tryon who suffered from the director's 'oppressive handling' (p. 305). This hints at Schneider's perfectionism and work ethic as she was responsive to Preminger's precise and harsh direction, an echo of Visconti's autocratic, and occasionally abusive, treatment (see Part II, chapter 1) and her tendency to suffer through the 'artistic' process in order to produce her best work.

misunderstandings and comic imbroglios, Sam pretends to be Janet's husband in order to help her qualify for her grandfather's inheritance that stipulates that she must be married in order to receive the fortune. Janet is of foreign nationality (she also lived 'all over the world'), but she is also foreign in the sense that, being divorced, she had broken ranks, embodying a deviation from US patriarchal standards (she says that 'some girls are born to be single'). However, the perfect family picture painted by her neighbours will prove her wrong and she changes her mind at the end.

Schneider's character is introduced at her arrival at the airport in a tailored skirt-suit (that she 'just picked up from Paris') with fur coat and hat and a three rows pearl necklace; she also speaks a few words of French with the waiter, and she then inadvertently meets Sam while she takes a shower and he walks in. These elements set up the figure of the European chic seductress, but Schneider does not seduce Sam on purpose. She might wear stunningly fashionable 1960s costumes that embrace a large colour palette, dance the cha-cha-cha while the camera slightly zooms in to emphasise her buttocks in a tight silk dress, or inhabit Sam's fantasy in his sleep, *Good Neighbor Sam* does not depict her as a seductress and it remains one of the very few titles in Schneider's filmography that offers the portrayal of sincere female friendship and support. If the comic situations sometimes drive Janet and Min to compete against each other, they try to make their respective husbands more responsive, which accords with the strict heteronormative morality of the film when Janet and her ex-husband (Michael Connors) reconcile to marry again. Though Schneider's performance in the film is relatively naturalistic, her delivery lacks subtlety. In dramas, one can see the scope and the richness of her emotional range (as previously examined in *The Cardinal* for example), but there is no such transparency in her comedic performance. Instead she tends to call attention to her technique with histrionics such as exaggerated shrugs, dramatic head turns, overdone expressions of shock – as in the way she overplays Janet's outrageousness in reaction to her ex-husband's advances and petty jealousy. This might suggest an inept grasp of the material, but it also highlights that Schneider was uncomfortable performing in comedies.

The female characterisation carried by Schneider's role in *What's New Pussycat* (Clive Donner, 1965) is equally conservative. Written by Woody Allen (who also appears in his first film role), this US slapstick comedy in the vein of the cinema of the absurd was shot in Paris and tells the story of notorious womanizer Michael James (Peter O'Toole, the title refers to his pick-up line to women) who, pressured into marriage by

his fiancée Carol (Schneider), seeks counsel from a psychoanalyst (Peter Sellers) for being unfaithful. The other women (Capucine, Ursula Andress, and Paula Prentiss) are presented in a misogynist way, as sex-driven creatures who cannot control their instincts in front of irresistible heartthrob O'Toole. Dressed in her now familiar Chanel suit and other classic fashion ensembles, sporting rather unflattering permed hairstyle and heavy makeup, and with her insistent demand to marry, Schneider embodies the demure wife against the outrageously sexy other women: Capucine as a nymphomaniac, Prentiss as an exotic dancer, and Andress as a parachutist in animal-print hugging pantsuits. She defends her traditional view of marriage but is deemed 'hysterical' by Michael (she tries in vain to give him a taste of his own medicine by seducing Allen's character but she gets too drunk to sleep with him), who resists her until the last scene of the film. There, finally married to Michael, Carol rants and nags as he makes eyes at the soft-voiced city hall's clerk performed by pop singer Françoise Hardy. Playing a prudish woman in a world of farcical sex-obsessed stereotypes, Schneider is perceived as disconnected from the rest of the film in her embodiment of a 'real lady' (Rabine, 1966b), and was deemed a 'bourgeois Sissi' (Bory, 1966). Her character is not the only explanation for this negative judgement, her performance is also in question. Her comic acting style, in *What's New Pussycat* in particular, is overly kinetic, especially in the use of her head (sharp turns. fig. 16), facial expressions and elocution, a register that clashes with her sophisticated, distant image in evidence in *Boccaccio '70* and other films such as *Katia* and *Plein Soleil*. Moreover, although she could convincingly perform in English, her delivery, while fluent, remains noticeably accented, clashing with the fast pace of the comic dialogues. As a result, rather than the embodiment of 'normality', she seems incongruous and self-conscious, traits that were noticed by critics of the time (Chazal, 1966; Chauvet, 1966).

Fig. 16. Schneider's overstated comic performance in *What's New, Pussycat* (1965).

Overall, Schneider's presence in Hollywood comedies met with relative indifference from the US press, except for her self-consciousness that was viewed as a consequence of her taking her participation in every production very seriously, to the point of being nicknamed 'Miss Worry' by the US press (Benichou and Pommier, 1981, p. 69; Krenn, 2013a, p. 180). Her perfectionism and dedication which were valued in Europe, in the US context carried negative connotations – she was judged demanding. This sheds a light on how differently Schneider's Hollywood films were perceived by various audiences. In Austria and West Germany, they illustrated the sensitive dynamic between European actors' exoticism and assimilation in Hollywood cinema. According to Vincendeau, 'too much embedding within national identity curtails the possibilities of export, too little may provoke rejection at home' (2017, p. 367). As a matter of fact, the German-speaking media's words of pride ('Romy Schneider conquers Hollywood', *Bunte*, 23/10/1963) quickly turned to bitter resentment ('Since Marlene Dietrich, no diva of German language have so profoundly avoided her place of heritage', *Der Spiegel*, 13/03/1963, p. 81). The Austrian and German press were, as we saw, already lukewarm in their response to her break from her *Sissi*-based national treasure status. Their disgruntlement worsened when Schneider's words were (allegedly) misreported or misinterpreted regarding her relation to her native language and hometown. One example was a paper in *Look* stating she would not work with German film producers anymore[13], and another gossipy story reported that she was refusing to speak and be spoken to in

[13] 'Ich werde […] mit den deutschen Filmproduzenten kein Wort wechseln […]' (*Der Spiegel*, 13/03/1963, p. 81).

German.[14] All this prompted an 'anti-German' and 'anti-Vienna' characterisation (Schneider and Seydel, 1989, pp. 188-189). This – mostly – negative reception echoes another change in the perception of the star at home. In the late 1950s, her glamourous, princess-like life was acceptable, even valorised for the traditional feminine values it carried (see Part I). However, as she tried to expand her persona, she also altered her lifestyle. She acquired several properties, associated with haute couture, and travelled outside Europe's borders. For this she was condemned in media for behaving like a capricious 'diva'. Beyond criticizing Schneider for turning her back on Sissi, the media in substance denigrated a professionally-ambitious woman and her achievements.

Conclusion

Hollywood studios' main recruiting policy for signing European stars was to hire them on the basis of their image in their countries of origin (Sellier, 2002, p. 213). But while it was difficult for most European female stars (such as Michèle Morgan, Micheline Presle, Hildegarde Knef, Senta Berger) to transfer their personal, nationally-anchored star identity to Hollywood film, the specific problem faced by Schneider during her Hollywood sojourn in the 1960s was that she precisely did not have such a well-established identity. Her image of the riskily sexy European woman had not yet solidified enough for transatlantic export. The image that had proven exportable (at least on the European market) was that of Sissi, but that was the one she vehemently rejected. Ironically it was this image of the pure maiden that first got attention from Hollywood in the late 1950s, being in line with white America's feminine codes. Walt Disney screen-tested her for the role of Lizbeth Hempel that ultimately went to Janet Munro in *Third Man on the Mountain* (Ken Annakin, 1959) (*Hollywood Reporter*, 28/01/1958; Krenn, 2013a, p. 116). Schneider had turned the offer down; she was disappointed as the role meant reinforcing the virgin stereotype and the saccharine image which she was struggling to leave behind. Her attempt at a Hollywood career and wish to secure a successful characterisation in US films were therefore founded on fragile premises. Her persona was still in transition, including in Europe, and as such it failed to export to America.

[14] Schneider explained that she preferred to be addressed on film sets in the language in which she was working (in Italian and French with Visconti, in English with Welles and Preminger, etc.), and when David Swift on the set of *Good Neighbor Sam* spoke to her in German she asked him to opt for English, and the rumour spread.

As my exploration of her diverse career in the 1960s has shown, Schneider's status as an accomplished and successful international star remained problematic. Most of her US films (except *The Cardinal*) commercially failed – including in Austria, West Germany and France, and her presence in European media declined further when she retired from work and public appearances for more than a year and a half after her marriage and the birth of her son David in 1966. After the critical hit of her performances in *Boccaccio '70* and *The Trial* she did however achieve, if not international, at least trans-continental recognition. In addition, she was on her way to become a truly transnational star in the sense that she was able to act credibly in four languages (German, English, Italian, French). Despite a mild German accent, her mediocre Hollywood career was therefore not due to her language ability. Yet she seemed unable to convert these assets into a sustained form of global stardom. Instead, her career took another turn and, in its third phase, she achieved major national stardom in France.

Chapter III. The French reinvention

Introduction

The previous chapters examined Romy Schneider's uneven international career throughout the 1960s – both how she built a 'serious actress' image, notably through international art films and how she branched out into a range of film genres, from modernist European art cinema to Hollywood comedy, with varying success. Yet, despite her adopting new career strategies and following new artistic directions, Schneider stubbornly remained Sissi for the majority of the public and the press until the end of the decade. Meanwhile, as we saw, her presence in European media declined especially when she retired from work to concentrate on her family. There is however a misconception circulating in French media today: that Schneider had slowly fallen into oblivion in the 1960s, and thus that her return to French cinema screens with *La Piscine* / *The Swimming Pool* (Jacques Deray, 1969) saved her career. In fact, despite some commercial failures, she remained an important star in France throughout the 1960s, with some of her films exceeding two to three million spectators (*Katia* and *Die schöne Lügnerin* were distributed in France in 1960, *The Cardinal* in 1963; Simsi, 2012, pp. 137, 144, 204), and *Triple Cross* was successful as well with 1,718,823 spectators (p. 271).[1]

Nonetheless, *La Piscine* had a substantial impact on Schneider's career and represented a landmark in the evolution of her star image, consecrating her status as feminine sex symbol in a *French* film. But before going into a detailed analysis of Schneider's performance and reception in *La Piscine*, I shall briefly consider a parallel media narrative built around her in the mid-1960s – a narrative that read the star as the epitome of the unsatisfied and insecure woman with a tendency to suffer from depression.

1. The melancholy star

To fully grasp the impact of *La Piscine* upon Schneider's reception in France and other European countries, it is useful to sum up her image right before the film. For this I turn to a contemporary German television documentary on the star. In the beginning of 1966, before filming *Triple Cross* and marrying Meyen, Schneider agreed to be the subject of a

[1] Schneider was also named best foreign actress of the year in June 1964 by the readers of *Le Figaro* and *Cinémonde* and received the audience award 'La Victoire du Cinéma Français' (Benichou and Pommier, 1981, p. 71).

documentary commissioned by Hellmut Haffner, head of the *Teleclub* show on the Bavarian television's third program. The film was directed by Hans-Jürgen Syberberg, now best known as a member of the New German Cinema movement, in particular for *Hitler, ein Film aus Deutschland* (1977).[2] Syberberg began his investigation of German culture through its popular mythology with his TV documentary on Fritz Kortner (*Fünfter Akt, Siebte Szene. Fritz Kortner probt Kabale und Liebe*, 1965), and, following this film's critical success, with *Romy - Portrait eines Gesichts / Romy - Anatomy of a Face (*aired on 21st January 1967). This 60-minute 'cinéma-vérité' (or 'cinéma direct') document (Graff, 2014, p. 412) spans over three days in February 1966 in the skiing town of Kitzbühel (Tyrol, Austria) where Schneider was spending her holidays in the house of Prince Ferdinand of Liechtenstein.

I do not have additional information about Schneider's reasons to agree to do the documentary, but her participation is in line with her strategy at the time to expand her serious actress reputation in order to distance herself from the image of Sissi. The actress could have considered that a film focussing on her private side would be a good opportunity to offer her opinion on her career. Instead, it added a dark and melancholy aspect to her off-screen persona. Photographed in black and white, *Romy - Portrait eines Gesichts* is set in the privacy of her vacation, showing her skiing, walking around the Kaps castle, and having an absorbed conversation with Syberberg (who stays off-camera) in an elegant living room. Due to the film's generic features, such as the use of black and white, that connote authenticity, the image that Schneider offers in *Portrait eines Gesichts* could be interpreted by audiences as mirroring the real person, which makes the film valuable for my study with regards to the emergent melancholy aspect of Schneider's persona at the time. The portrait of the star painted by the documentary is as paradoxical as Schneider's persona so far. *Portrait eines Gesichts* presents a conflicted and emotionally contradictory woman, swinging between extremes – Schneider shows a naive enthusiasm and a childish sentimentality, as well as a deep scepticism, a sadness and distance, mentioning the commercial failures of her films and other disillusioning experiences.

[2] For more on Syberberg see Anton Kaez's study *From Hitler to Heimat: the return of history as film* (1989) on Germany's approach to its stigmatised history, and Susan Sontag's essay 'Syberberg's Hitler' in *Under the sign of Saturn* (1980, pp. 137-165).

The feeling of having a peep at the 'real' Romy Schneider is notably strengthened by the film's style, and its difficult post-production history. First, the documentary departs from her other media appearances by the proximity and the openness that she seems to demonstrate. Schneider, then 27 years old, presents herself as 'ordinary', wearing minimal makeup. In her soft-modulated voice she offers her perspectives on her career and craft, and how her job is affecting her private life. She recognises her acute 'sensitivity', acknowledges her nervousness and self-doubt. Though she suffers from stage fright and fears performing in her native language, she expresses her desire to do theatre work in German, with a play 'preferably new and modern'. Adding to the authentic aspect of the portrait is Schneider's speech tone and body language. She is either assertive and confident and speaks quickly and with ease, or she speaks slowly, with long pauses, and is careful in her choice of words. At times she appears lost in her thoughts, sighs, and drops her head; she nervously wrings her hands, shakes her head, clutches her hands, and repeatedly moistens her lips, thus performing insecurity. This is enhanced by the many close-ups of her face showing the worry in her eyes, pensively drinking, smoking, running her hands through her hair (fig. 17).

The images suggest an unhappy and unsatisfied woman, an aspect of Schneider's image that started developing after her breakup with Delon, consolidated in the mid-1960s with several box office failures. Schneider's projection of unhappy femininity (at such young age) and her melancholy discourse are rooted in judgements about German national identity. She refers to the so-called 'Germanic spleen', a Wagnerian and romantic notion that she discovered via Visconti who offered this explanation to her frequent mood swings (moments of euphoria followed by deep despair).[3] She therefore willingly identifies with a national trait (however stereotypical that may be), and in doing so insists on her attachment to her German origins from which she also, simultaneously, distanced herself in the French- and German-speaking press (see previous chapter). Schneider evokes the beginning of her career, with her first film at the side of her mother, as well as the popular success of the *Sissi* cycle. Contrary to the French media endorsement of Schneider's disdain towards her most successful role, the star is here lucid about the progress of her career and the financial and professional security and fame it gave her. She said at her arrival in France that she 'did not want to be a princess anymore', which

[3] Notice how she again attributed the paternity of the phrase to her mentor and one of the most important male figures of her life and career.

she repeats in Syberberg's film but in a more conciliatory tone. She voices her search for happiness and simple living, and claims that she 'hates the star system' (a common discourse amongst stars). Yet she confesses behaving like a 'diva' and the film conveys an image of leisure, with glasses of Veuve Clicquot champagne, a silver tea set, US magazines on the table, a large bouquet of daffodils and tulips, plush chairs and sofas (*Der Spiegel* pointed out that the house's 'monthly rent with butler' amounted to 8,000 Deutschmarks, 06/02/1967, p. 94). Moreover, in addition to her black wooden ring set with diamonds (a gift from Visconti), she wears an eye-catching, large pearl brooch on her simple black turtle-neck dress (fig. 17). Thus, while Schneider ostensibly aimed for the German-speaking stage, she also wished to project the image of a glamourous international star.

Finally, *Portrait eines Gesichts*'s troubled post-production, reported in the press, emphasised its 'behind the scenes' aspect, hinting at Schneider's troubled home life: before the premiere, she successfully brought an injunction preventing the film coming out. At a private screening, Meyen had objected to the superimposition of an unsavoury joke (about homesickness and Jewish people) on a Sammy Davis Jr's song. Meyen also wanted to edit out Schneider's negative comments on the German-speaking press and mentions of himself. Schneider, Meyen, Haffner, and producer Rob Hower finally agreed on a single broadcast. But this was not without cost for Schneider: even before the broadcast, the press described her as a 'damaged Sissi' and quoted 'copyright expert Dr. Fromm' who said, 'You might get the impression that she is a very sad human child' (*Der Spiegel*, 06/02/1967, p. 94).

Now that I have briefly discussed the developing melancholy aspect of Schneider's on- and off-screen persona in the late 1960s, I shall turn towards its antithesis through her performance in *La Piscine*, the film that represented a definitive turn in her career, life, and persona.

Fig. 17. Schneider in 1966 in the documentary *Romy - Portrait eines Gesichts*.

2. *La Piscine* and the introduction of a sex symbol

La Piscine is a French thriller set in a grand and isolated villa in the sun-drenched hills overlooking Saint-Tropez and the Mediterranean. Jean-Paul (Delon) and Marianne (Schneider), a young, beautiful, and bourgeois couple, enjoy their vacation, the hot weather, and each other's bodies by lounging by the vast eponymous swimming pool. Their idle seclusion is interrupted by the arrival of their friend and record producer Harry (Maurice Ronet) and his 18-year-old daughter Pénélope (Jane Birkin). Marianne's decision to invite the pair to stay sets in motion a slow-burning four-way exchange of jealousy and masculine rivalry, as Marianne and Harry are former lovers and Pénélope's

ingenuous charm operates on Jean-Paul. The holiday ends with Jean-Paul drowning Harry in the pool and Marianne becoming his accomplice from the moment she decides to keep his secret from the police.

The following section is structured in three parts: first, the on- and off-screen reunion of Schneider and Delon and the media perception of their pairing, then Schneider's development of a sophisticated *bourgeoise* persona, and finally an analysis of her haute-couture costumes, which gives me the opportunity to briefly evoke the late 1960s bourgeois culture through the prism of Saint-Tropez's cosmopolitanism.

2.1. Reuniting the star couple: the myth of eternal love

For a number of reasons examined in the previous sections, in the years preceding *La Piscine* Schneider's career was at a relatively low ebb. As a result, the media narrative surrounding the film's inception, production and distribution took disproportionate importance in the film's marketing strategy and subsequent commercial success, and in the reshaping of Schneider's star image. The narrative went – and still goes – that Schneider had reached such a low point in her career that the French producers were reluctant to cast her in the co-starring role of Marianne alongside Delon who suggested her name, insisted, and was able to obtain her a contract. This 'story', whether true or not[4], was reiterated in the press and supported by the stars themselves with notably a staged arrival of Schneider greeted by Delon on 12th August at Nice airport, with media focussing on their reactions as ex-fiancés meeting again after years apart – which was false as they met previously at Schneider's residence in Berlin in preparation for the film. The video of this welcome party contains an interview with Delon telling the assembled journalists that he is 'a bit emotional', welcoming Schneider as it has been 'almost ten years to this day after the first time I welcomed her at an airport in 1958', when she was 'a big European *vedette* and me not at all, I was starting in the business'. Reporter Jean-Marie Molingo asks what role Schneider is set to perform in *La Piscine* and Delon's response encapsulates how Schneider's image rebranding was thought through and controlled even before filming:

[4] Depending on the source, it was director Jacques Deray who suggested Schneider to Delon who was first inclined to cast Delphine Seyrig, Angie Dickinson, Natalie Wood, or Monica Vitti.

> First of all, it is a woman's role. Romy is a woman, she is not a girl anymore, we must be clear about that, she is not Sissi anymore, nor the little girl with chubby cheeks, she really is a woman – besides, you will realise it in a moment. (*JT 13H*, 12/08/1968)

On cue, Schneider, smiling and radiant, steps out of a plane, goes down the stairs, and tightly embraces Delon. As they will shortly on screen, they present the image of a very handsome, young, privileged, perfectly matched couple. Delon wears beige linen trousers, a black unbuttoned shirt, and a leather jacket; and Schneider sports what is probably a creation by French couturier André Courrèges (he designed the film's costumes for women), an A-line 'little white dress' (in reference to Chanel's 'little black dress' but intended for the younger audience of the 1960s, Steele, 1997, pp. 52, 61, 64), white gloves and a black vinyl headband. I will return to Schneider's modern and youthful looks as they played a decisive role in propelling her towards a more mature image, that of the glamourous and distinguished woman in 1970s France.

The promotional narrative of Schneider and Delon's reunion echoed in reverse that of the stars' first on-screen pairing in *Christine* (1958) which argued that Schneider herself had chosen new *jeune premier* Delon to co-star, based on photographs. Thus, after she helped him leap to stardom, he was returning the favour, a phrasing adopted by Delon and the French-speaking press that credited him for her 'second wind' (though I argue that it was her third). Schneider's success was, yet again, attributed to the agency of a man (Delon after Visconti and Welles), and one who had the ascendency over her in career and personal terms (see Part II, chapter 1). The overwhelming presence of Delon marks the development of fundamental aspects of her image: vulnerability and dignity in the face of adversity (she had been 'abandoned' by Delon for another woman and had to put on a brave face). As already mentioned, films such as *Boccaccio '70* and *The Cardinal* reinforced her image of the beautiful yet vulnerable woman (Ginette Vincendeau phrased it as Schneider being 'shackled by beauty', 2009, p. 25). If still latent, Schneider's vulnerability also featured in *La Piscine*. The ending has her 'shackled' to Delon's character through her decision to not disclose his secret to the police, bounding them together even though they were about to break up. The final shot shows Schneider and Delon through a window in each other's arms, a composition that signals their shared imprisonment, their poisoned love condemning them to a life of repression and guilt, a trope typical of film noir of which *La Piscine* is a descendent. As Felicity Chaplin (2015) aptly points out the final shot might even refer to another doomed, romantic but

nonetheless emblematic couple of French cinema: Jean Gabin and Michèle Morgan in *Le Quai des brumes* (Marcel Carné, 1938), similarly shot through a window frame (fig. 18). The end of *La Piscine* is also an allusion to Schneider and Delon's first on-screen couple in *Christine*, in which the two star-crossed lovers are reunited in a pointless death.

La Piscine was thus a vehicle[5] for the charismatic star couple, their former real-life romance and their on-screen chemistry on which the film largely relies.[6] They form a beautiful pair, magnified for audiences who had followed their relationship in the press (see Part I, chapter 2). Their earlier romance was used to blur the boarder between their on-screen sexually-charged embraces and what could be inferred as remaining off-screen feelings. Reunited on screen, Schneider and Delon perpetuated the culturally valued image of everlasting love and youthful physical beauty ('Romy Schneider in the arms or Alain Delon', *Jours de France*, 31/08/1968).

Fig. 18. Thirty years apart, two tragic couples of French cinema: Gabin and Morgan in *Le Quai des brumes*, Schneider and Delon in *La Piscine*.

2.2. The body on display

La Piscine reflects a new French art de vivre, a modern hedonism that started in the late 1950s and boomed in the 1960s. Parisians initiated the movement of spending expensive holidays by the sea, populating the French beaches during the summer, especially the glamorous Côte d'Azur and the fashionable village of Saint-Tropez popularised by

[5] A vehicle is written or produced for a specific star, regardless of whether the film is to promote their career, or to capitalise on their current popularity. It is created to display that star's particular skills or personal appeal (Dyer, 1979, p. 62; Britton, 1991, p. 205).

[6] The French press also insisted on the reunion of Delon and Ronet after *Plein Soleil* (René Clément, 1960) and *Lost Command* (Mark Robson, 1966).

Brigitte Bardot in 1956 (Vincendeau, 2013, p. 136). Those new types of leisure entailed physical display: bodies were exposed and taboos broken when women sunbathed topless for the first time in 1964 in Saint-Tropez (Laubier, 1990, pp. 16, 50, 66-67). Progressively, stripping became a social phenomenon and, especially via Bardot's films, songs and overall images of 'sexual liberation', a cinematographic phenomenon. If this new lifestyle was seen as evidence of progress in French society, it also represented an imposition on women's bodies, one that has moulded female beauty to this day. Revealing one's body in swimsuit became the norm, which invited a relentless gaze onto female bodies, subjecting them to objectification because of new and unrealistic social standards of physical perfection. Naomi Wolf (2002) calls this 'the beauty myth'. She explains it as the 'violent backlash against feminism that uses images of female beauty as a political weapon against women's advancement' after the latter had 'released themselves from the feminine mystique of domesticity'. According to Wolf, this pressure compromises the ability of women to be effective in, and accepted by, society: the 'ideology of beauty is the last one remaining of the old feminine ideologies that still has the power to control [women]' (pp. 10-13). Thus, while women's social power increased in 1960s France thanks to changes in legislation (*La Piscine* came out a few months after the events of May 68), another way to discipline women arose – the culturally-induced obligation to expose their bodies (including, particularly, for actresses), with new and stringent standards of beauty, nudity and thinness. *La Piscine* is fairly representative of this contradiction: Schneider embodies a feminine ideal of the time – a distinguished *bourgeoise* in a luxurious setting that showcases her perfect body in a bikini. *La Piscine*'s scriptwriter Jean-Claude Carrière explained that, when casting the film, other actresses were considered for the role of Marianne, but that they all had 'a swimsuit issue' (documentary *Romy, de tout son coeur*, 2016). The sexism of Carrière's remark apart, it is not clear whether other actresses were not willing to be filmed in a bikini, or whether they wanted the role but were not considered good enough. But Schneider did not have a 'swimsuit issue' as her body obviously fitted the producers' standards of perfection. The film's opening scene sets that tone.

The first shot shows a silent and sun-tanned Delon lying by the pool, one hand in the azure water, the other slowly and carefully pouring a drink into his mouth, the epitome

of the ideal French *homme fatal* (Vincendeau, 2000b, p. 171).[7] His idle sunbathing is disturbed by someone plunging into the pool. Schneider's head emerges from the water, she swims a few breaststrokes, catches her breath and pivots on her back, she smiles with an open mouth and offers a glimpse of her breasts in a black halter-neck bikini. She stops, lies on the pool's steps and glances over her shoulder. Her gaze is determined, Delon looks back at her and she swims backwards, glancing at him again. She climbs out of the water, sucking in her flat stomach. She slips her wet hair back and walks around the pool towards Delon, smiling. At the time of filming in August and September 1968, Schneider was turning 30 and she is stunningly beautiful on screen: her curvaceous, toned and bronzed body clad in a black bikini is overtly on display (fig. 19). As discussed in previous chapters, Schneider had a characteristic gait: she walked with her elbows turned outward, her hands positioned backward, and swung her arms, all of which gave her a way of holding her body that was, arguably, more athletic than graceful, although her confident port de tête owed something to her ballet training.[8] She put her hips forward when walking, inducing a discreet swaying movement to her body. Back in the scene, this way of walking gives confidence and sensuality to Marianne who aggressively pursues Jean-Paul: she stops above him and the camera zooms in on her wet body that responds to his caresses (her stomach contracts and slightly moves), then pans down to show Delon's hands rising and touching her upper thighs. She lies down next to him and kisses him. Schneider performs a character whose sexuality is overt and confident, and her presence dominates the screen. Their embrace reveals passionate partners attuned to each other's sexual desire, enhanced by the erotic chemistry between the two stars. Their past relationship was abundantly exploited by the production ('Alain et Romy: a love as tender as the memory', *Jours de France*, 22/08/1968), as well as their physical resemblance on which Visconti had capitalised in his on-stage pairing of the young couple in 1961 (see Part II, chapter 1). The actors appear comfortable and at ease with each other's bodies, their cat-like movements and feline facial traits mirroring each other. While this magnetic opening scene can be seen as female-driven in its assertion of her desire, Schneider's erotic image in the rest of the film is exclusively defined from a

[7] This opening shot scene was used, amongst other shots of Delon by and in the swimming pool, in a 2011 commercial for Dior's perfume *Eau Sauvage* (Dior's first perfume for men, created in 1966), featuring the film's original music by Michel Legrand.

[8] Schneider's exercise regimen was to practice modern dance and ballet.

heterosexual male perspective that pointedly situates her as an object of sexual fascination for the male characters. With *La Piscine*, Schneider's nude body became a new site of tension for both visual exploitation and narrative purposes, as the following analysis demonstrates.

In one significant scene, Schneider, in her black bikini, is lying on a couch in the villa's cool living room, listening to a languorous jazz tune. A sensual and silent exchange starts with Harry's perspective dictating the camera movements. Smoking a cigar, he tilts his head to have a better look at Marianne. Then, in a medium shot framing her face and breasts, Schneider smiles in his direction, turns to straighten her head on the cushion and closes her eyes as the camera slowly pans down on her body as if she could feel Harry's stare on her, with her fingers delicately brushing her left thigh (fig. 20). This shot of Schneider's body finishes on Pénélope's disapproving face, her eyes going from her father to Marianne and her father again, frowning at Harry's deceitful and intense desire for Marianne. A subsequent scene (superfluous in terms of narrative development) presents a similar composition to the film's opening scene: Schneider is lying naked on her front as the camera slowly begins panning up her body, first her calves, then her thighs, her buttocks, her back moving slightly as she breathes and finally her sleeping face, the white sheets emphasising her tan (fig. 21) (the display of her naked back and buttocks followed conventions of the time[9]). This image was reprised in the original poster for the film in which Delon, in a macho pose and predatory look, seems to prey above his sleeping 'victim'. This brief interlude interrupting the narrative[10] might refer to a famous shot of Brigitte Bardot lying on a white pile blanket in *Le Mépris* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1963) (fig. 21). I have mentioned Bardot several times in this study in order to better examine, through contrast, Schneider's innocent persona of the late 1950s and *bourgeoise* image of the early 1960s. *La Piscine* further developed Schneider's on-screen

[9] An actress (even less a star) was rarely seen from the back: Schneider's entire nude back was filmed to show her slim and athletic figure and her tanned skin, but it was also in accordance with the French cinematographic 'code' of female nudity. *La Piscine* came out just before the early 1970s' turning point with first examples of full-frontal nudity (notably with Bardot and Birkin in Roger Vadim 1973's film *Don Juan ou si Don Juan était une femme*, Vincendeau, 2013, p. 119).

[10] In her 1975 seminal text 'Visual pleasure and narrative cinema', Laura Mulvey points out an aesthetic consequence of such moments: a tension arises between the narrative course (audiences wants to know what happens next in the film), and the 'spectacle of the woman' (audiences want to stop and look at the glamorous female star).

eroticism, a primary aspect of Bardot's persona; and yet the impact of the two stars' images in this respect differs in terms of agency. Whereas Bardot raised her head and looked at Godard's camera, as if she was calling out and directly addressing the spectators caught in a voyeuristic act[11], Schneider remained passive and powerless in Deray's erotic mise-en-scène (contrary to Bardot's direct gaze, Schneider's eyes are shut as she appears to be sleeping).[12] In *La Piscine*, Schneider's body is highlighted, even celebrated (European film critics wrote about 'the plenitude of being in her 30s' and her 'blossoming': 'An Empress becomes a woman', 'Romy conquers men', *De Post*, 11/04/1971). Yet, while she remained defined mainly through her attractive physique, her character does not exercise control on the use of her body.

Schneider's erotic characterisation in *La Piscine* was the first of many others subsequently that illustrate and perpetuate 'the beauty myth'. Marianne does not purposefully seduce Harry who is arrogant enough to think that he can easily reclaim her, and yet the film's turning point (Jean-Paul's murderous act) is a direct consequence of Schneider's 'bewitching attraction' (Vincendeau, 2009, p. 25), of the overtly sexual display of her body. The two scenes described above are composed and framed to emphasise Schneider's radiant but submissive beauty. This key aspect of her persona, built through such moments of spectacle, became recurrent and anticipated of Schneider's performances from *La Piscine* onwards. Schneider's eroticism is further highlighted in contrast to Pénélope, performed by British actress Jane Birkin (21 years old during filming). The difference between the two characters (and subsequently the impact on their star images) is observable in their respective first appearances on screen. In contrast to Marianne's confident and radiant presence Pénélope's introduction is subdued. She sits quietly in the passenger seat of her father's car, unnoticed during the initial exchange between Marianne and Harry. Birkin is softly spoken, reserved, and her long-legged,

[11] In this shot, Godard deliberately played with Bardot's stardom and popular image of overt eroticism by instituting a distance from it. If Bardot appears to undertake her sexuality in the shot (repeated several times throughout the film), in doing so Godard equally addressed his star's iconicity (Vincendeau, 2013, pp. 105-106).

[12] At this point of my thesis that often compares Schneider and Bardot's personas, one could wonder if the two knew each other and if they had an amicable relationship. According to sources, Schneider and Bardot were friends and shared a deep respect for each other's persons and careers. Although they had the same agent (Olga Horstig) at the time of Schneider's arrival in France in 1958, they only officially met during the filming of *La Piscine* (Bardot still lives nearby Saint-Tropez), over a diner hosted by Delon.

gamine appearance contrasts with Schneider's slim but womanly figure. Their respective relation to the swimming pool itself illustrates their different embodiment of femininity. Whereas Schneider jumps in in the opening sequence, Pénélope is never seen swimming, though she says that she loves to swim in the sea. Preference for the sea associates Birkin with nature (Chaplin, 2015, p. 57), connoting a youthful spirit, as opposed to Schneider's cultural allure and cosmopolitanism (seen in a number of her 1960s films discussed above). This distinction conveys another key component in the development of Schneider's French persona – her bourgeois sophistication, as the next section devoted to her costumes shall analyse.

Fig. 19. Schneider's toned and curvaceous body on display in *La Piscine* (1969).

Fig. 20. A moment of voyeurism on Schneider's body in *La Piscine*.

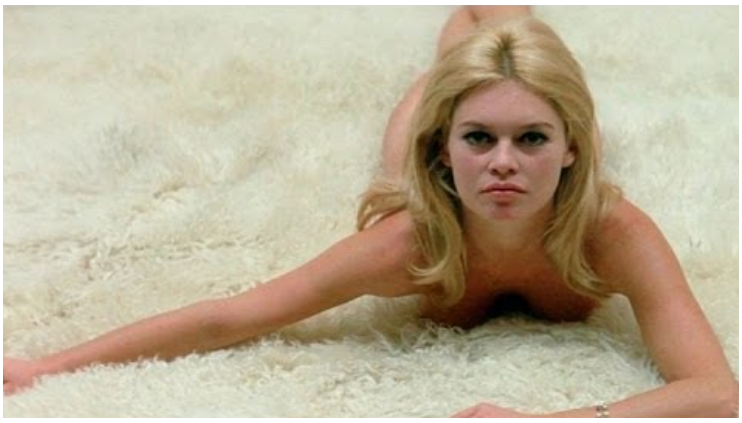

Fig. 21. The original poster of *La Piscine* (above), and Brigitte Bardot in *Le Mépris* (below).

2.3. The sophisticated bourgeoise *of the 1960s*

As we saw in chapters 1 and 2, through the 1960s Schneider image evolved in class terms towards that of a distinguished bourgeois woman (*Boccaccio '70*, *The Cardinal*, *Good Neighbor Sam*, *La Voleuse*). *La Piscine* is the film that crystallised this identity and gave it a French inflexion. Three aspects form Schneider's French characterisation in the film: the myth of the *Parisienne* (the elegant, chic and beautiful woman), her elocution and accent, and her costumes.

Regarding the notion of Parisian feminine identity, Felicity Chaplin (2015) argues that *La Piscine* qualifies as a '*Parisienne* film' because of its location and the presence of Schneider and Birkin, each attached to a dual *Parisienne* image – the sophisticate and

the ingénue. Saint-Tropez was a favourite destination for Parisians (Chaplin, p. 49), and one could also consider *La Piscine* as a Côte d'Azur film, an unofficial subgenre of mostly thrillers that typically feature rich and beautiful protagonists in bathing suits who live in luxurious villas or hotels (Jean-Paul is a writer, Marianne a former journalist and Harry a music producer who drives a Maserati), a criminal element (Harry's murder), and a cosmopolite element (the two foreign female leads).[13] While Saint-Tropez is more associated with a carefree and bohemian attitude (at least at the time) inspired by Bardot, the French Riviera, with localities such as Antibes, Saint-Jean-Cap-Ferrat, Cannes and Monaco, carries images of cosmopolitan glamour and French chic and luxury. Likewise, Chaplin sees cosmopolitanism as 'one of the key motifs in *Parisienne* iconography' (p. 61), arguing that, despite being an emblem of French elegance and fashion flair, the Parisian woman is less a national figure than a universal one. This means that the cultural status of the *Parisienne* is determined by taste (and wealth) rather than nationality. Chaplin also aptly remarks that Schneider and Birkin are 'part of a larger cohort of foreign actresses who have personified *la Parisienne*' on screen, pointing to Audrey Hepburn, Ingrid Bergman, Jean Seberg, and Anna Karina. On and off-screen, Schneider was associated with one aspect of the *Parisienne* as identified by Charles Rearick (2011, p. 34) – the 'elegant high-fashion woman' from a bourgeois upbringing (the other one being the 'sexy fun-loving young *Parisienne*', usually from the working-class). Indeed, her off-screen persona was structured around a narrative of bourgeois transformation that took place in Paris in the early 1960s when she arrived in the French capital, met Coco Chanel for *Boccaccio '70*, and was transformed from a 'plumpish Austrian beauty into a sleek *Parisienne*' (*Life Magazine*, 08/03/1963, pp. 82-83; and see Part II, chapter 1). Since then, she remained faithful to Chanel's creations off screen but at the same time cultivated other links to fashion[14] by progressively diversifying her style (for day-to-day and professional occasions) with designs by Courrèges and Yves Saint Laurent, two essential names of French haute-couture who revolutionised 1960s and 1970s fashion (see next chapter). *La Piscine* marked a reiteration of this transformation narrative after the film's immense success, confirming her chic bourgeois *Parisienne* image and influencing her subsequent roles in French films.

[13] The quintessential Côte d'Azur thriller would be Alfred Hitchock's *To Catch a Thief* (1955).

[14] According to Stephen Gundle (2018, p. 172), entertainment and fashion are the two 'essential Parisian industries'.

Schneider's identity in *La Piscine* is also marked by her foreign-accented elocution. In the opening sequence, Marianne and Jean-Paul's embrace is interrupted by the phone ringing in the distant house. She wants to pick it up but he restrains her and audience can distinctly hear Schneider's German accent: 'Mais attends, je vais revenir' ('I'll be back in a bit'). The way she pronounces the word 'revenir' is typical of her Germanic accent when speaking French: she had a habit of lengthening vowels and distinctly articulating each word and sound. French being a second language to her, her pace was measured and slower than her Francophone screen partners. For instance, in a later scene, Marianne announces that it was Harry on the phone: 'Il est avec sa fille, il lui fait visiter la côte' ('He is with his daughter, he is showing her the Riviera'). There, Schneider sounds quite posh as she insists on and lengthens the phonemes [i] ('fille') and [o] ('côte') and her pronunciation is clearer and more elaborated than French natives: Delon's mumbling response, with his cigarette dangling off his mouth, offers a telling contrast. She slightly straightens her head when saying 'la côte', finishing the word by a barely perceptible pursing of her lips, followed by her signature 'œillade', gazing on the side towards Delon, looking askance with an impish, quizzical smile (fig. 22). This does not mean that she could not deliver a line with unstudied ease, using naturalistic performance techniques such as interrupted speech and hesitation for instance, giving an 'an air of improvisation to the performance' (Naremore, 1988, p. 77), but this particular way of speaking contributed to Schneider's self-assured, cultured persona, that of a woman who expressed herself with refinement, exactitude, and measure. Schneider's elocution also suited the film's style, based on the exchange of looks and ambiguous stares, rather than wordy dialogues. German words are mainly formed by elements either monosyllabic ('Mann', 'Mond') or disyllabic in which the second syllable has the vowel 'e' ('Vater', 'Amsel'), and this gives a particular musicality to the German, and especially the German-Austrian accent in French. Added to her round and soft voice, this musicality confers quite a charming and elegant quality to Schneider speaking French (see Wiese, 1996; Canepari, 2014). In that regard, she was part of a tradition in place since the beginning of French sound cinema that frequently featured French spoken by foreign actors with heavy and distinctive accents (Chion, 2008, p. 12). Films frequently made foreign actors speak an impeccable French (perfect syntax, rich vocabulary, as Schneider did) that 'the French characters themselves would fear to speak, at the risk of passing for snobs' (p. 13). Chion points out that this type of refined language is the prerogative of high society (he suggests that it might also be to add a 'touch of colour' compensating for

the scarcity of regional accents in French cinema – with the notable exception of the Southern accent, pp. 13-14, 19).

Fig. 22. Schneider's pursing of the lips and 'œillade' in *La Piscine*.

Together with her identity as *Parisienne* and as foreigner, Schneider's sophisticated eroticism in *La Piscine* relies importantly on her costumes, designed by Courrèges, as well as her immaculate hairstyle and makeup. Schneider's fashion style is classically glamorous and mature, following an elaborate bourgeois dress code that coordinates to daily rituals (breakfast, leisure, shopping in the village, and evening); clearly Deray took every opportunity to display his star in flattering attires. Schneider's daytime costumes exude understated chic (there is a predominance of neutral colours: navy blue, white, pale blue) with dresses with modest above-the-knee hemlines. Her swimwear is seductive, chic and minimalist (either black or white to draw the eye on her body) and includes a black halter-neck bikini, a white one-piece bathing suit with thin straps and a deep back, and a black one-piece swimsuit, all displaying a curvaceous figure. Marianne goes shopping in Saint-Tropez in navy flat front trousers, tucked-in pale blue button-down shirt with turned up collar and navy espadrilles; she carries a woven tote bag and wears tortoise-shell sunglasses, popular holiday-wear accessories, but all evidently within an affluent price range. Her evening dresses strike a more formal glamour note, with colours designed to show off her tanned skin: a floor-length gown (see below) and other dresses in vibrant nuances of greens, shimmering fabrics (sequins, satin). The outfits include diamond earrings and Schneider's hair, turned blond by the sun, is either worn out and meticulously swept back from her face or tied back in a classic chignon or complicated French twist, drawing attention to her bronzed face and 'striking green eyes' (Vincendeau, 2009, p. 25) often accentuated with heavy black eyeliner and,

in this instance, chartreuse eyeshadow (fig. 23). These carefully planned ensembles compose an image of affluent and formal femininity. In contrast, Birkin's wardrobe suggests the bohemian ingénue and the *femme-enfant* with her jeans and t-shirts, mini-dresses and micro-skirts. Her white crocheted tunic over her white bikini draw attention to her long limbs, androgynous figure and connote a more youthful style than Schneider (the tomboyish gamine) and an eroticism more veiled than Schneider's (Fraser-Cavassoni, 2004, p. 148; Chaplin, 2015, p. 49).

There are two scenes in which Schneider's evening dresses become the focus of the camera's attention, and thus the spectator, and the male character interacting with the garment. Both Courrèges' designs showcase one of Schneider's best physical asset – her bare back –, which helps develop her erotic aura (the designs also mean she does not wear a bra). The first one is composed of a halter-turtleneck top revealing her entire back, a dim light emphasising the lines of her spine and her lean muscles (fig. 24, left), and it plays a part in a scene of sexual foreplay: Delon unties her collar, kneads her back as they passionately kiss, then cuts off a branch from a garden bush and uses it to brush and lash gently Schneider's bare back and buttocks while she moans.[15] The second 'performative' dress features in a scene in which Schneider, captured in a long shot, emerges from the villa in the twilight: she wears a floor-length sleeveless evening gown of fluid chiffon fabric featuring psychedelic swirls of various kinds of green (fig. 24, right). A large opening in the back allows Harry to slip his hand after he has expressed his admiration for the spectacular appearance of his ex-lover. Courrèges's pared-down designs, iconic of his 1960s style, combined with vivid colours (inspired by Pop Art) flatter Schneider's bronzed skin, sun-bleached hair and slim but athletic body.

[15] This scene was re-edited in a 2012 commercial for Dior's perfume *Eau Sauvage* and features the song 'I'm A Man' by the Black Strobe.

Fig. 23. Schneider's elaborate 1960s hairstyle and makeup in *La Piscine*.

Fig. 24. Two of Schneider's 'performative' dresses, designed by André Courrèges.

Conclusion

La Piscine, with 2,341,721 spectators in France in 1969 (Simsi, 2012, p. 34), was very popular and had a particularly important impact on Schneider's French star identity.[16] Schneider could have been eclipsed by Delon and Ronet who were two of the biggest French male stars at the time, but she so successfully embodied a winning combination of bourgeois confidence, erotic allure and Parisian chic that French audiences at least were ready to relinquish Sissi and embrace 'their' new female star ('Romy Schneider, in fantastic shape, makes a remarkable entrance and easily dominates her two male partners', Martin, 1969). The success of the film and of Schneider in particular led to a

[16] Some French critics were less enthusiast, deeming the film too 'bourgeois' (Lachize, 1969; Bory, 1969), too 'slow' (*Le Canard enchaîné*, 12/02/1969), and too 'cold' and 'classic' (Bory, 1969) in its directorial style, which other journalists precisely appreciated because it was at the opposite of the New Wave's 'scruffiness' (Veillot, 1969) and they praised the film's 'formal beauty' (*Le Populaire*, 14/02/1969; Rabine, 1969).

career renewal for her. Her ‘second wind’ would from now on be associated with French cinema with, realist and contemporary-set films featuring her as a ‘modern’, ‘ideal’ romantic partner (albeit precisely class-based), films about the German Occupation that embedded her melancholy characters into the tragic events of History, and finally an altogether more pessimistic, morbid streak. But before she reached this point, the event that changed the course of her career and moulded her French star image was meeting French director Claude Sautet during a post-synchronisation session for *La Piscine* at the Boulogne-Billancourt studios. The partnership between Schneider and Sautet, which lasted over five films, changed the course of both their careers.

Part III
Romy Schneider's French Career: 1969-1982

Introduction: Schneider and the 'long 1970s'

I now reach Romy Schneider's third and last phase of her career, which mainly took place in France and followed a successful ascending arc until her premature death at the age of 43 in May 1982. This last phase was, and still is, considered by many (especially French-speaking audiences and critics) as the most fruitful and defining moment of her career.

This period was prolific: between 1969 and 1982, Schneider made 28 films, which, unfortunately, means that I cannot deal with all of them to the same degree of detail. Three aspects emerge as particularly significant, thus the remaining chapters in this section will follow this division: the first chapter examines Schneider's films with Claude Sautet and the development of her 'modern woman' image; the second chapter analyses her German Occupation films that emphasised her Germanic identity; and the last chapter considers films that display her performance in an 'excessive' mode – in contrast to the more naturalistic style of her films with Sautet and her Occupation films.

The 'long 1970s' represent a complex period of change during which I track several developments in Schneider's paradoxical star image. This confirms Schneider as a star continually in transition, and this is precisely where her appeal lies. More than ever, the question of Schneider's feminine identity and what it meant in times of change in 1970s France was put to the fore.

* * *

1. The aftermath of May 68: social change

Romy Schneider's persona in the 1970s can be seen as echoing/responding to wide-scale societal shifting dynamics in the condition of women that derived from the ongoing modernisation of France during the 'Trente Glorieuses' (post-war boom). This period led to a 'progressive destruction of the housewife model' (Chaperon, 1995, p. 62) with the streamlining of housework, birth control, and the growth in women's paid employment. Though stemming from earlier feminist struggles, these changes benefited from the

political and cultural effervescence of the May 68 events, which is why I first consider the developments within French society throughout the late 1960s and 1970s.

Following the students and workers' demonstrations of 1968, French society experienced a destabilising moment. Young people attacked moral and social norms and adopted new behaviours and fashions. Sexuality too became a means of revolt, breaking societal taboos. While May 68 in itself did little to advance the cause of women, the post-68 years in France were momentous, notably marked by the foundation of the Mouvement pour la Libération des Femmes, or MLF (Movement for Women's Liberation) in 1970. The Secrétariat d'État à la condition féminine was created in 1974 and numerous demonstrations in favour of equal rights for women gradually lead to legislative change. On 5th April 1971, 343 women, amongst whom Simone de Beauvoir, Catherine Deneuve, Marguerite Duras, Gisèle Halimi, Françoise Fabian, Bernadette Lafont, Jeanne Moreau, Micheline Presle, Françoise Sagan, Delphine Seyrig, Nadine Trintignant, and Agnès Varda, signed a manifesto publicly admitting to having broken the 1920 Law by having had an abortion, at the risk of being sentenced[1]. Women started their long fight and defended the rights to bodily autonomy and birth control, which they obtained with the reimbursement of the contraceptive pill in 1974[2]. The 'Loi Veil' (named after Minister of Health Simone Veil) legalising abortion was voted in 1975, made permanent in 1979, and completed in 1982 with social security reimbursement. Throughout the 1970s, women fought for sexual emancipation and reached, in theory, legal foundations for equal recognition within the couple and the family, but also for professional equality, which was strengthened in the following decades.

2. French cinema: evolving genres and stardom

The revolutionary events of May 68 had a direct impact on French cinema. The 'affaire Langlois' that began in February 1968, mobilising and uniting film professionals, predated the events of May. With the removal of Cinémathèque's co-founder Henri Langlois (later reinstated), *cinephiles* took to the streets and film became an instrument

[1] In 1971, a woman who had an abortion or attempted to have one risked a prison sentence of six months to 12 years, and a penalty of 360 to 7,200 francs. In case of recurrence, women faced five to ten years in prison and a 18,000 to 72,000 franc-penalty. Pro-choice propaganda was reprimanded by a decree from 11th May 1955.

[2] The 'Loi Neuwirth' legalised the oral contraceptive pill in 1967.

of revolt. The 1968 Cannes festival was interrupted and the venue was occupied at the initiative of filmmakers such as François Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard, Claude Lelouch, and Louis Malle. Their media intervention and political demonstration in Cannes echoed their call for a new cinema. Filmmakers called for an indefinite strike of film production in order to reform the industry and they attacked the abusive rules of censorship. Criticism also seized the topic of films addressing social issues and questioned the fascination that images have on audiences. Although most of these demands were not met, and none concerned women, the events had an effect on censorship.

In the 1970s, censorship considerably loosened, which led to the arrival of erotic films, from Roger Vadim's *Barbarella* (1968) to the *Emmanuelle* series (Just Jaeckin, from 1974), and the explosion of porn film. Sexuality imbued also films made by dissident and/or provocative authors, such as Nelly Kaplan with *La Fiancée du pirate* (1969), Bernardo Bertolucci with *Last Tango in Paris* (1972), Marco Ferreri and *La Grande bouffe* (1973), and Bertrand Blier with *Les Valseuses* (1974). New Wave figureheads kept working, while a few new auteurs emerged (Philippe Garrel, Maurice Pialat, Jean Eustache). The legacy of May 68 was also reflected in the *cinéma engagé* (militant cinema) including Godard and Jean-Pierre Gorin who decided to film exclusively in 16mm (see Smith, 2005; Shafto, 2006). The decade also saw the rise of women filmmakers: Nadine Trintignant, Nelly Kaplan, Nina Companeez, Yannick Bellon, Chantal Ackerman, Coline Serreau, Anna Karina, Jeanne Moreau, and women cinema's pioneer Agnès Varda put the women's movement at the centre of her film *L'une chante, l'autre pas* (1977). The (still timidly) growing feminisation of cinema led to some new trends in the representation of gender relations in parallel with the expansion of feminist movements (see Rollet and Tarr, 2001). Nevertheless, French society remained strongly attached to the patriarchal status quo. French cinema mostly equated female 'modernity' with sexuality and increased on-screen nudity, frequently harnessed to misogynist stereotypes, such as the femme fatale, embodied by glamorous actresses (Jane Fonda, Brigitte Bardot, Jeanne Moreau, Stéphane Audran, Catherine Deneuve).

Beyond these changes, mainstream genres continued to flourish while adapting to new societal topics, such as comedy with the *café-théâtre* generation (more explicit humour, incisive social commentaries) (see Lanzoni, 2014, pp. 156-158), and detective films moving in the direction of political thrillers with Yves Boisset, Alain Corneau, and Costa-Gavras (Guérif, 1981, p. 163). Melodrama dealt, in a classical form, with social issues such as transgressive sexual relations (*Mourir d'aimer*, André Cayatte, 1971),

drugs (*More*, Barbet Schroeder, 1969), and incest (*Le Souffle au coeur*, Louis Malle, 1971). There was a renewed interest in History and the German Occupation in particular with films that were often called 'rétro' at the time and would later be termed 'heritage' films. Schneider was prominent in such films (e.g. *Le Vieux fusil*, Robert Enrico, 1975) as she was in the work of a band of post-New Wave, 'quality' auteurs, such as Bertrand Tavernier, Michel Deville, and Claude Sautet who engaged, in a naturalistic style, with contemporary French bourgeois society (Vincendeau, 1996, p. 8).

In the changing landscape of French cinema in the post-68 era, female stars also evidenced a complex evolution. In 1967, 1968, and 1969, three actresses entered the 'Top 20' of the most successful films in France (Simsi, 2012, pp. 32-34): Annie Girardot at the end of 1967 with *Vivre pour vivre* (Claude Lelouch) and *Erotissimo* (Gérard Pirès, 1969); Marlène Jobert in 1968 with *Alexandre le bienheureux* (Yves Robert), *Faut pas prendre les enfants du bon Dieu pour des canards sauvages* (Michel Audiard), and *L'Astragale* (Guy Casaril), and Romy Schneider in 1969 with *La Piscine*. Other successful actresses included Mireille Darc and Jane Birkin. During this transitional period, Brigitte Bardot and Jeanne Moreau, the most popular stars of the 1960s, were on the wane. Bardot appeared in the Top 20 with *Les Novices* (Guy Casaril, 1970) and *Les Pétroleuses* (Christian-Jaque, 1971) (Simsi, pp. 35-36) but she retired from film in 1973.

While the success of *La Piscine* situated Schneider within drama, and she then became associated with Sautet's middle-class cinema, Girardot and Jobert frequently featured in comedies. The former embodied a new type of active and independent female character, and the latter played sweet, naïve, and scatter-brained woman. As for Deneuve, after a slump between 1968 and 1974 during which her conservative persona did not coincide with the political and naturalistic tendencies of the new French cinema, she succeeded in 'democratising' her image with a popular role in the comedy *Le Sauvage* (Jean-Paul Rappeneau, 1975) and regained her place amongst France's most popular female stars (Vincendeau, 2008, p. 249; Le Gras, 2007b, p. 304). From Schneider's generation in France only Schneider herself, Deneuve (born in 1943) and Darc (born, like Schneider, in 1938) passed the May 68 mark, alternating roles in auteur cinema and popular genre films.

3. Schneider's eclectic, 'in-between' roles

Before Schneider's fame and popularity were re-established in France, the first years of the 1970s were marked by an erratic career path as she multiplied roles in international

productions, which I will briefly examine here. None of them however were successful at the box office and some remained undistributed in France. Nonetheless, a particular image emerged from these diverse films: a woman fully assuming her sexuality. After May 68, traditional codes of behaviour related to sexuality and interpersonal relationships were considerably challenged and revaluated and Schneider's presence in those early 1970s films has to be considered in this light. She incarnated women who were sexually available, but not significantly emancipated in other aspects of their lives. Thus, in this respect her persona did not depart from the ones of Brigitte Bardot, Bernadette Lafont, Mireille Darc, or Marlène Jobert (contrary to Deneuve whose sexuality was contained, only suggestive as in *Belle de jour* by Luis Buñuel in 1967). Their personas were however distinct from one another in terms of class: while Girardot and Jobert played women from modest or 'ordinary' backgrounds, Schneider and Deneuve performed bourgeois characters.

In the London-based drama *My Lover, my son* (John Newland, 1970) Schneider plays Francesca, an older man's wealthy and unhappy wife who is devoted to her son James (Dennis Waterman) because he reminds her of her late lover. She develops feelings for him and reacts jealously when he falls in love with his girlfriend Julie (Patricia Brake). Although Schneider's previous success *Les Choses de la vie* was released in France a few months before (in March) and was still in film theatres, *My Lover, my son* failed at the box office and stayed in French cinemas for only two weeks in the summer of 1970. It also went unnoticed internationally while Louis Malle's *Le Souffle au coeur*, which had a similar topic (incest), was a success a year later. Schneider, who was 31 at the time, was not persuasive as Waterman's mother (he was 22). Nevertheless, the role of the sophisticated rich woman, and the lavish setting (Francesca lives in a Tudor mansion with a baroque swimming pool) matched Schneider's bourgeois persona that had been very successful in *La Piscine*.

She also appeared in the French thriller *Qui?*, released in September 1970. Directed and co-written by Léonard Keigel with Paul Gégauff (who co-wrote *Plein Soleil*), the film is misogynistic in its treatment of Schneider's character, Marina – she is physically abused and, because she is presented having a mysterious and sensuous aura, the story frames her as a femme fatale who 'deserves' her punishment, as well as the obvious culprit in the murder mystery. The film failed to reach 500,000 spectators. Schneider also had a small part as the protagonist's girlfriend Nira in the British-Israeli film *Bloomfield* (Richard Harris, 1971), a Harris-vehicle shot in Tel Aviv. The film was

not critically praised and failed at the box office – it was never distributed in France. Schneider later starred in *La Califfa* / *The Lady Caliph* (1971), the first film of Italian writer Alberto Bevilacqua adapted from his eponymous best-seller novel published in 1964.[3] The film failed in France (with 48,179 spectators it is the lowest turnout for a Schneider film in France), but was a success in Italy where it polarised critics and resonated with the country's troubled social and political climate of the 'Years of Lead' ('Anni di piombo'). The film stands out in Schneider's filmography as she performs one of her very few proletarian roles, perhaps explaining the film's failure in France. Irene Corsini, the widow of a workman killed by the police, becomes the leader of a protest movement at her factory, run by entrepreneur Doberdò (Ugo Tognazzi). Their relationship is at first belligerent (illustrated by many intense, green-eyed stares during the police charge and the riot scenes) but then develops into an affair. The role was at odds with Schneider sophisticated bourgeois image. However, Irene's contained fury and aggressive charm allowed Schneider to widen her acting skills, while she was made to foreground a powerful sensuality following on from *Boccaccio '70*, *10.30 pm Summer*, and *La Piscine*. The erotic scenes however are as voyeuristic as in the above-mentioned films, and Schneider's tanned and toned body is displayed in full-figured nude scenes (the entire back and her top front).

Consolidating her sensual image, Schneider posed fully nude in the German magazine *Stern* twice in 1973: first lying on her stomach (01/03/1973) in a pose reminiscent of her nap in *La Piscine*, and then swimming in the Mediterranean Sea (16/08/1973, fig. 1).[4] *La Califfa* was presented at the Cannes Festival in May 1971. Joseph Losey directed Schneider the following year in her sixth and last collaboration with Delon, *The Assassination of Trotsky* (1972). Here, her supporting role of Gita Samuels (the companion of Delon as Ramón Mercader, Trotsky's assassin), was similar to Irene in *La Califfa*: her tense, she adopts a melodramatically amplified performance to convey the passionate and dedicated communist militant. As Trotsky's (Richard Burton) former secretary and friend, Gita is used and betrayed by her lover to approach and kill the former communist leader in exile in Mexico. Schneider is a stooge to Delon's laconic performance of cold elegance (in line with his then recent roles in Jean-Pierre Melville's *Le Samouraï* in 1967 and Jacques Deray's *Borsalino* in 1970), and his character

[3] Schneider did not speak Italian in the film's original version.

[4] The photos were also published in the December issue of the French men's magazine *Lui* in 1973.

constantly abuses her verbally during their few scenes together. In short, Gita merely adorned the male character's love arc and her political opinions are undeveloped, which seems implausible as she is Trotsky's assistant. In the end, Gita is too infatuated with Mercader to perceive his motives, and she proves instrumental in her leader's death, thus fitting the stereotype of a woman dominated by her emotions.

Those political roles barely left a mark on Schneider's persona (even though *The Assassination of Trotsky* was a box office success in April 1972[5]) and she continued to build a French on- and off-screen identity by swimming against the tide of the early 1970s and identifying with upper-class characters: 'I am very *bourgeoise* you know, absolutely, I am very *bourgeoise* and very old-fashioned' (interview by Claude Couderc, 29/06/1974). And yet, in just a few years, she became the most sought-after actress of French cinema. In order to explain this paradox, I now turn towards Schneider's films and performances that attest to her return to stardom with the new French *cinéma de qualité*, notably her collaboration with Claude Sautet.

Fig. 1. Schneider on the cover of *Stern* magazine in August 1973. The title on the left reads: 'After the separation [with Harry Meyen – *AN*]: Romy now loves whoever she wants'.

[5] The film made 563,000 entries in France (Simsi, 2012, p. 128).

Chapter I. The 'Ideal French woman'[1]

Introduction

This chapter examines one of the most fascinating paradoxes of Schneider's star image in French cinema: her ambivalent relation to feminism and changes in women's lives and their representation on screen. Indeed, Schneider was (and still is) praised in French-speaking media for her image of the emancipated woman in 1970s France. Yet, as we shall see, this categorisation was problematic and has to be put into perspective, especially because the media discourse on Schneider has little changed since the early 1970s. This chapter is entitled 'the *ideal* French woman' in view of the ambivalent feminine identity that she projected, worshipped by the media as 'modern' yet reactionary in gender terms.

Because Claude Sautet was the director who contributed the most to Schneider's persona in the 1970s, this chapter focuses primarily on his films. Nonetheless, I attach other Schneider films to the trend developed in his work, namely *Un amour de pluie* / *Love in the rain* (Jean-Claude Brialy, 1974), *Le Mouton enragé* / *Love at the top* (Michel Deville, 1974), and *Les Innocents aux mains sales* / *Dirty Hands* (Claude Chabrol, 1975).

1. The cinema of Claude Sautet

Claude Sautet, like Bertrand Tavernier and Michel Deville, is often thought of as exemplifying a new *cinéma de qualité* (quality cinema) after the innovations of the New Wave (Hayward, 1993, p. 229; Austin, 1996, p. 142). These directors are thereby placed within the lineage of the mainstream filmmakers of the 1940s and 1950s such as Claude Autant-Lara, Jean Delannoy, René Clair and Marcel Carné who worked within the French studio system, with solid teams of craftsmen and who were famously attacked by Truffaut in his *Cahiers du cinéma* article 'A certain tendency of French cinema' (1954). In this respect 'quality', for Truffaut, was a negative term, his critical practice a strategy that paved the way for the New Wave films. While Truffaut's argument has been very influential, Sautet and his colleagues could be seen to reclaim the values of the 1950s traditional filmmaking craft while modernising them by expressing more forcefully their own concerns and displaying a more informal visual style. Consistent features in Sautet's work, both stylistic and thematic, created an authorial signature that is now highly

[1] Sautet said that Schneider 'perfectly answered to what [he] excepted at the time of an actress regarding women' (Gassen and Hurst, 1991, p. 251).

respected. His oeuvre reveals the significance of collective work with regular collaborators, especially recognised screenwriters such as Jean-Loup Dabadie who wrote or co-wrote most of his films, and Claude Néron. Composer Philippe Sarde, cinematographer Jean Boffety, and editor Jacqueline Thiédot were also part of the 'team', and last but not least his troupe of stars: Schneider was one of them, as well as Michel Piccoli, Lino Ventura, Yves Montand, Bernard Fresson, and Jean Bouise. Sautet's films are also recognisable for their intimate realism, created through a classic, understated, mise-en-scène (shooting in colour, on location, with a discreet camerawork, except for the occasional zoom, and transparent editing – in line with the naturalistic aesthetic of his time). Finally, Sautet favoured 'modern' societal topics set in middle-class milieus. His films focus on male psychology, yet offer flattering portraits of their female stars. His 'bourgeois' cinema of the 1970s, especially the films made with Schneider, is little known outside of francophone borders, but they were successful at the French box office, which made Schneider very popular in return.

Schneider and Sautet met in the Boulogne Studios near Paris during a post-synchronisation session of *La Piscine* (Schneider dubbed herself in German and English). He wished to cast Annie Girardot in the role of Hélène for his next project *Les Choses de la vie*, but she declined. Sautet apparently saw *La Piscine*'s rushes, which, according to Jean-Loup Dabadie, convinced him to cast Schneider because of her sensuality in the film (documentary *Romy, de tout son coeur*, 2016). The myth surrounding their first encounter casts it as fortuitous: Sautet either observed Schneider recording dialogues behind the sound booth's glass, or he did not recognise her in the corridor but was immediately seduced by her 'strong vivacity', her 'natural look', and her 'simplicity' (interview with Sautet by Michel Drucker, 26/11/1978). She was wearing minimal makeup and had her hair either covered by a hat or in a chignon, which he reportedly loved as it revealed her face. Although the meeting between the two was, in fact, planned (Gassen and Hurst, 1991, p. 251), the 'legend' points out key elements in the pair's working relationship and the reshaping of Schneider's persona at that time – Sautet 'discovered' Schneider and he was the director who best magnified her natural beauty.

Schneider and Sautet made five films together: *Les Choses de la vie* / *The Things of life* (1970), *Max et les ferrailleurs* / *Max and the junkmen* (1971), *César et Rosalie* / *César and Rosalie* (1972), *Mado* (1976), and *Une histoire simple* / *A Simple story* (1978). Although the media narrative framing their partnership evolved around the auteur-muse dynamic, none of those films were specifically written for Schneider, with the exception

of *Une histoire simple*. The films were critical and box office successes, all exceeding one million spectators. Moreover, they were all part of the 20 most successful films the year of their release in France. While building on her established bourgeois and sensual identity, this set of films developed for Schneider a reassuring image of vulnerable femininity, a relatively new trait of Schneider's persona that since then has defined her in the eyes of French-speaking audiences.

* * *

Sautet's films with Schneider are all set in contemporary times. Except for the thriller *Max et les ferrailleurs*, they depict the everyday life of bourgeois Parisian milieus in which Schneider performed the same type of character. Whether she is a wife, a lover, a prostitute, a divorced mother, or a friend, she personifies a notion that developed from their first collaboration in 1969 to their last in 1978: the sexually emancipated, modern Parisian *bourgeoise* – or rather, the masculine vision of this '*ideal* woman'. And yet, following May 68, French cinema experienced a period that was not favourable to bourgeois values, institutions, or stars (Le Gras, 2007b, p. 303). As already mentioned, for example, most of Catherine Deneuve's films in the 1970s were unsuccessful. Schneider presented an equally conservative and traditional image as Deneuve at the turn of the 1970s. Her beauty and its presentation through grooming (makeup, accessories, hairstyle), though not as cold as Deneuve's, suggested a distance that construed her as inaccessible. Yet, she became, with Girardot, the most popular star of the decade. The work of this chapter is in part to try and understand this paradox.

The following section focuses on two complementary poles: Schneider's minimalist performance of vulnerable beauty, and her roles as the modern Parisian *bourgeoise*. For this I focus here on her three most popular films with Sautet: *Les Choses de la vie*, *César et Rosalie*, and *Une histoire simple*[2].

2. Schneider's vulnerable beauty

2.1. Les Choses de la vie

With *Les Choses de la vie*, Claude Sautet, who had mostly directed thrillers so far, initiated a cycle of contemporary and intimate portraits of upper middle-class Parisians

[2] Respectively raking 8th, 11th, and 13th in the Top 20 the year of their release.

for which he became famous amongst French audiences. The film is based on the eponymous novel by Paul Guimard who co-wrote the screenplay with Sautet and Dabadie. The film begins with the image of a car wheel in an orchard: on a summer morning, a fancy sports car has crashed on a rural road, hurling the driver Pierre (Michel Piccoli) onto the grass. As he loses consciousness, he revisits the joys and sorrows that constitute the little but essential 'things of life': his wife Catherine (Lea Massari) from whom he is separated, his partner Hélène (Schneider), his son Bertrand (Gérard Lartigau), his father (Henri Nassiet), his friend François (Jean Bouise), his work, and flashes of joy experienced whilst sailing with his family around the Île de Ré or cycling amorously with Hélène (the latter image features on the film's original poster). Pierre's inner monologue revolves around a letter that must not be found. Pierre and Hélène had quarrelled the night before the crash and, stopping at a café on his way to Rennes, Pierre writes her a letter ending their relationship, but does not post it. Driving past a wedding, he realises that the letter was a mistake and that he should marry Hélène. Although rushed to the hospital, he does not recover and Catherine is given his belongings, including the unsent letter that she reads and tears to pieces when she sees Hélène arriving. Doing so, Catherine fulfils Pierre's ultimate wish; it also suggests that she considers Schneider's character vulnerable, as if Hélène could not handle the loss of Pierre's love and his death.

Les Choses de la vie was intended as Piccoli's star vehicle, and Schneider has a relatively small screen time. Nevertheless, her performance had a great impact on her career and persona. Schneider's presence in the film was emphasised in various media texts and promotional material: she was extensively shown in the original French trailer, she shared a co-starring credit with Piccoli (their names appearing together before the film title in the opening credits), and, amongst other examples, the Italian title of the film directly refers to her character – *L'amante* ('the lover'). She also recorded the film's theme song, a melancholy ballad entitled 'La Chanson d'Hélène' ('Hélène's song') that emphasises her character's fragility since the lyrics evoke what Hélène and Pierre's life would have been if he had not died – he no longer loves her, leaves her, and she is left distraught.

Hélène is not particularly developed, and her character mostly relies on Schneider's performance as a beauty and as 'other'. It is hinted that she has a job as a German-French translator and when she first meets Pierre she mocks her own accent ('As you can hear I'm from Paris'), referencing Schneider's Germanness, which is otherwise relatively irrelevant in Sautet's films. On the one hand, her Germanic persona contributes

to the construction of her character as confident, even haughty at times; and, on the other hand, she trailed from *La Piscine* the image of a sophisticated and chic woman. However, a new aspect of Schneider's image appeared in *Les Choses de la vie*: she started to project a fragile and victimised identity. While this was latent in a number of 1960s films, *Les Choses de la vie* crystallised an amalgam between Schneider's beauty/erotic appeal, a bourgeois register, and vulnerability, as illustrated by the scene analysed below.

After the car crash that acts as a preamble and accompanies the credits, the opening scene sets the tone. It begins with Schneider lying nude on her stomach next to Piccoli in the darkness of the bedroom; she wakes up, drapes a white towel around her body and gets up quietly. On the balcony of the Parisian apartment, she ties up her brunette hair while looking down the street. She walks back inside and greedily bites on an apple before sitting in front of a typewriter. She chews the apple and puts on reading glasses. She is filmed in profile, the neck pulled forward, emphasising her jawline (fig. 2). Schneider's on-screen presence was often defined through men's gaze, and this film is no exception. Piccoli sits behind Schneider while she types, he smokes a cigarette and then the camera, adopting his point of view, closes-up on the curve of Schneider's neck and tanned shoulders. Then the camera cuts back to Schneider who, focused on her reading and typing, softly asks: 'What are you doing?', Pierre – on behalf of the audience – responds 'I'm looking at you'. She lowers her chin slightly, the camera returns to Pierre's point-of-view while she turns over towards him and smiles, framed as in a painting (fig. 3). Schneider often executed her smile in two beats: first, there is a fleeting trace of a smile she appears to try and restrain, expanding her nostrils, and then she stretches her lips unreservedly, but without showing her teeth which had the particularity to put the emphasis on her eyes. Her graceful and yet hesitant smile, with its tinge of sadness, marks a defining moment for both the character and the star. Another example of this is the quick zoom-in to an extreme close-up of her face when she suddenly turns over to face the camera in the scene when she reacts to Pierre's shout who just outbid her at an auction, signifying the exact moment he fell in love with her, at first sight. These prolonged close-up shots of Schneider's face (during which she barely blinks) suggest a lack of distance and thus significantly favour the audience's emotional bond with her characters and with the star.[3]

[3] Barry King calls this process 'hypersemiotisation' (1985, p. 41).

Les Choses de la vie was a popular[4] and critical success: it won the Louis Delluc Prize for Best Film in 1969 and was nominated for the Palme d'Or at the 1970 Cannes Festival. This success revitalised the directing career of Sautet who had not directed a film since *L'Arme à gauche* in 1965 (he nonetheless participated in the writing of many scripts throughout the 1960s). The film was even more popular than *La Piscine* at the French box office. This triumph prompted their partnership and two other films quickly followed: *Max et les ferrailleurs* in 1971 and *César et Rosalie* in 1972.

Fig. 2. Schneider in the opening sequence of *Les Choses de la vie* (1970).

Fig. 3. Schneider's two-beat smile in *Les Choses de la vie*.

2.2. César et Rosalie

Schneider's eponymous character in *César et Rosalie*, could be an older version of Hélène from *Les Choses de la vie* as she is as sensitive and tender, yet she is more confident in her relations to others (especially men), and mature and sophisticated in her attitudes and

[4] With 2,959,682 spectators in France, the film was the 8th highest grossing film in 1970 (Simsi, 2012, p. 35).

her looks. *César et Rosalie* is one of Sautet's most appreciated and most representative films. It tells the story of a complicated love triangle. Rosalie, formerly married to Antoine (her daughter's father, Umberto Orsini), was previously also in love with handsome young artist David (Sami Frey) who let her marry Antoine and then disappeared. Now, five years later, David has returned but Rosalie is in love with César (Yves Montand), a middle-aged, rich scrap-metal dealer. Rosalie is drawn to David, then back to César and so on, in a succession of arrangements: César and Rosalie, David and Rosalie, César, David and Rosalie, and even César and David at the end. Everyone adores Rosalie: she is young, agreeable, moderately rich, accommodating, and multilingual (César calls on her to do translations in English for his business).

Schneider's performance displays a calm and easy-going composure which makes her appear, in turn, fragile and elegantly melancholy. The actress's sorrowful eyes and repressed smile inscribe a certain gravity to her face (fig. 4). The contrast to Montand is striking: his charm is skittish, imposing, brutish, and he displays a showman's eagerness to please (he talks fast, loudly and over people, he hums and sings, he uses a lot of onomatopoeias and hand gestures to emphasise and 'colour' his comments). César is a parvenu and Rosalie is portrayed as socially superior to him, while Schneider looks at him with either contempt (with a superior and detached smirk, sometimes slightly raised eyebrows) or compassion.

In Schneider's performance panoply, now the 'two-beat smile' joins the 'œillade', as well as a pout, giving Rosalie a half-amused/half-mocking, mischievous look (fig. 5). Another performance sign that regularly occurs in *César et Rosalie* is a sharp turn of the head that gives a graceful swing to her bouncy curls, brushing her face. This is often seen in long or medium shots when she walks, laughs, greets people, and chats in crowded scenes, to make sure viewers do not lose track of the star. Through her performance, Schneider creates an elusive and detached Rosalie: she is a woman on the move (as seen on the film's original poster, fig. 6), who is amused and appreciates being chased by men, but whose desire remains mysterious – she remains a male fantasy. The vitality and energy in Schneider's gait when her character is in group are counterbalanced by her performance during more intimate scenes. There, to her soft voice speaking few lines of dialogues and her sidelong and penetrating gaze, are added some relatively new motifs, such as the way she slowly and methodically carries her cigarette from her fingertips to her mouth, extensively pulling on it (fig. 7), suggesting a woman aware and in control of her power of seduction.

Fig. 4. Schneider's sorrowful eyes in *César et Rosalie* (1972).

Fig. 5. Schneider's mischievous expression in *César et Rosalie*.

Fig. 6. *César et Rosalie*'s original 1972 poster.

Fig. 7. Schneider's meticulous way of smoking (*César et Rosalie*).

Rosalie is presented as subjected to men's desires and inconsistencies. As the embodiment of men's fantasies, she is dispossessed of her own subjectivity, as suggested by her first appearance in the film, when spectators discover her through the eyes of César. The latter suddenly enters her bedroom without knocking. The use of a quick zoom in, scrutinizing Schneider's look, highlights César's agitation and impatience to see the woman he desires (fig. 8). But this process also affects our perception of Schneider's beauty as vulnerable, as her startled face occupies a growing portion of the screen. Spectators are complicit in this stolen image of Schneider and enter Rosalie's life as if by breaking in.

Indeed, because Rosalie explicitly states more than once that she is intent on keeping her free will, viewers could forget that her condition as obliging and self-effacing

woman corresponds to a very traditional role, in contradiction to women's rising demands for autonomy at the time. Despite her socially privileged status, no emotional crisis can keep Rosalie out of the kitchen: tired of attending to César's poker games, she goes to David's studio, only to serve coffee. This submissive gender configuration of Schneider's character speaks volume about her image in the 1970s. The critical consensus that saw Schneider as the 'ideal French woman' ('Romy Schneider, so beautiful, so strong, so vulnerable, is the ideal woman and a purebred actress', Rabine, *La Croix*, 19/03/1974) can be seen as a backlash against women's emancipation. Overall, Schneider's vulnerable and glamourous beauty in *César et Rosalie* created the archetype of a woman adhering to tradition under the guise of modernity. She reconciled in her persona several paradoxes: the emancipated modern woman but 'reassuring' – because vulnerable – seductress; the woman who was respectable in class terms, an effect enshrined in her distinguished (i.e. affluent) environment and clothes, and yet sexually available.

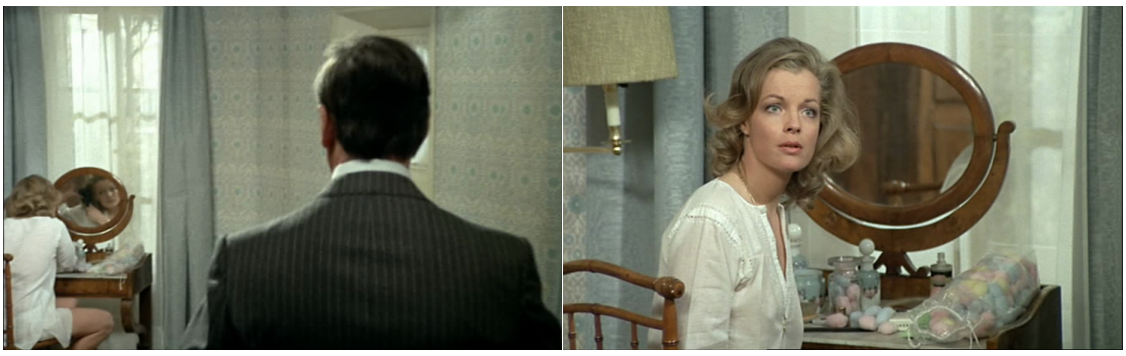

Fig. 8. César barges in (*César et Rosalie*).

Schneider's role as Elizabeth in the romantic drama *Un amour de pluie* (Jean-Claude Brialy, 1974) confirms this sexual aura. The film presents the simultaneous sexual awakenings of a mother (Schneider) and her teenage daughter (Bénédicte Bucher) while on vacation in the spa-town of Vittel (Vosges region). Elizabeth cheats on her husband (only presents on the phone via the voice of Michel Piccoli) and enjoys a summer fling with Giovanni (Nino Castelnuovo), a dashing Italian who stays in her hotel. The same goes for her roles as Roberte in the dark comedy *Le Mouton enragé* (Michel Deville, 1974) and Julie in the thriller *Les Innocents aux mains sales* (Claude Chabrol, 1975) who both take a lover without thinking twice about it. Schneider's on-screen 'liberated' sexual behaviour is justified by narratives that pair her with disappointing male partners as a starting point for looking elsewhere to satisfy her desire. Her characters' husbands are

either absent (Piccoli in *Un amour de pluie*), insufferably pretentious (Michel Vitold as a philosophy professor in *Le Mouton enragé*), or old and impotent (Rod Steiger in *Les Innocents aux mains sales*). And yet, Schneider's characters are as docile as they are aggressive, as subordinate as they are independent, and as strong and clever and as they are tender and vulnerable, and most importantly, seeking protection from men – which is often denied to them at the end (Elizabeth returns to her husband, Roberte is shot, and Julie is left alone and afraid). In other words, her characters' attempts at emancipation, albeit only sexual emancipation, are punished.

To conclude, let's consider the written caption on the cover of *Le Soir Illustré* below (fig. 9): 'Romy Schneider: men are afraid of us', whose boldness very much contrasts with the accompanying photograph of Schneider in *Le Mouton enragé*. She is beautiful, elegant (she wears couture clothes designed by Maison Torrente in the film), but also sad and fragile (her distant eyes and melancholy smile), echoing her performance in the film. Roberte represents 'love', the 'only source of happiness and of femininity' (de Baroncelli, 1974). While the caption alludes to an important anti-feminist motif at the time (that liberated women were detrimental to men; Bard, 1999), Schneider's vulnerable beauty thus became configured as a reassuring, 'ideal' representation against the 'threat' of women's emancipation.

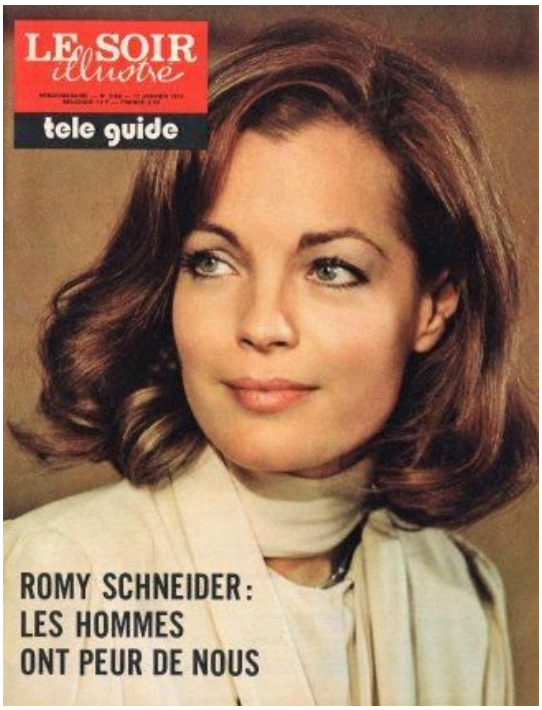

Fig. 9. Schneider as Roberte in *Le Mouton enragé* (*Le Soir Illustré,* 17/01/1974, cover).

3. The Parisian *bourgeoise* look

Having examined the ideological implications of Schneider's persona in the evolving gender configurations of the time in two of Sautet's films, I need to consider the spectacle of female bourgeois modernity she successfully offered on and off screen, through clothes, makeup and hairstyle.

Schneider remained foremost a glamorous star whose fashionable appearance was fundamental. Her costume in the opening sequence of *Les Choses de la vie* (a white towel), and her mundane feminine gestures (doing her hair without the help of a mirror), are meant to signify that Hélène and Schneider are women like any others – except within a privileged social milieu. In films directed by Sautet, characters live in large, tastefully decorated, modern apartments; they regularly eat in restaurants, they drive expensive cars, they spend their vacations and weekends in pleasant country or seaside houses and they dress in couture clothes or chic ready-to-wear.

3.1. In search of a style: the turn of the 1970s

Following his work on *La Piscine*, André Courrèges designed Schneider's costumes in *Les Choses de la vie*. In the film, Schneider wears the couturier's most famous design: his A-line mini-dress, either sleeveless or with cap sleeves, and in different colours – bright white, lemon yellow and lime. The modern and minimalistic look of these dresses is sparsely accessorised. Contrary to *La Piscine,* in *Les Choses de la vie* Schneider's clothes are not the centre of attention, nor do they emphasise her figure. The line of the trapeze-shaped dresses erases the curves of her hips, tights, and breasts; her bare legs are rarely seen and mostly shown when she wears trousers. She wears 'casual' modern ensembles such as high-waisted, bell-bottomed jeans combined with a tucked-in, V-neck pale blue shirt (fig. 10). These Courrèges designs exude modernity and the androgyny of 1960s clothes; they do not overtly sexualise the woman wearing them. Courrèges's costumes discreetly flatter Schneider's beauty without being overtly spectacular.

The opposite approach was adopted for Schneider's second collaboration with Sautet in 1971 for *Max et les ferrailleurs*, in which she performs Lily, a German-born prostitute. For the part, Sautet developed a minor character into a full-fledged leading role, at the star's demand (Gassen and Hurst, 1991, p. 252). She is the girlfriend of Abel (Bernard Fresson), one of the junkmen of the title who robs construction sites with his gang in Nanterre. Undercover detective Max (Michel Piccoli) is determined to catch them on the spot. Posing as a client and pretending to be a banker, he manipulates Lily and

lures the ruffians into holding up a bank. Appearing 30 minutes into the film, Schneider is given a true star entrance. We see her through the eyes of Piccoli as he observes Lily and Abel leaving a restaurant from afar, in a point of view shot through his telescope. The sexual nature of Lily's work is understood because of the cliché connotations of her clothes, designed by Tanine Autré and Jacques Cottin: a fuchsia ribbon around her neck in a bow, high-heeled ankle-strapped shoes, sheer stockings, and a shiny black vinyl raincoat (fig. 11). Schneider's makeup (by Jean-Pierre Eychenne) is much more pronounced than in any other film she did before, with lines forming fuller and bigger lips and pearly eyeshadows covering her eyelids up to the eyebrows. Her vibrantly coloured dresses are formfitting, low-cut, and conspicuously emphasise the shape of her breasts. Those elements stress the sexual nature of Lily's work, and yet there is a class-induced self-possession in the way Schneider talks, walks and carries herself (straight back, shoulders back, proud chin) that places her eroticism within the realm of fantasy and refinement rather than vulgarity. The fact that Max and Lily never sleep together (though they develop romantic feelings) is also crucial. Schneider's clothes thus signify an intense sexual aura, but without the toughness and agency that they would suggest; and with the more sordid sexual aspect of her work carried through external elements and crucially left off screen. Despite the stated nature of her profession, the narrative, her clothes and her performance distance the star from being associated with the role of a prostitute and thus retaining her aura of distinction.

3.2. Schneider and Saint Laurent

Further proof of Schneider embracing bourgeois modernity is found in her partnership with French couturier Yves Saint Laurent who designed her costumes in *César et Rosalie* and *Les Innocents aux mains sales*. In those films she is as elegant as she was in *La Piscine*, *Les Choses de la vie*, *Un amour de pluie* (in which she wears perfectly cut, cinched, and single-coloured ensembles of either black or white) and *Le Mouton enragé*, yet they are distinctively more mature and emblematic of the era. According to Valerie Steele, the 1970s was a high point for Western women's fashion and Yves Saint Laurent was one of the most famous and influential designers of the time (1997, p. 99). His haute couture creations incorporated ethnic and vintage influences. Exploiting the eroticism of sexual ambiguity, he drew inspiration from menswear and created the female version of the tuxedo suit in 1966. Saint Laurent's relation with the cinema is well-known and in particular he developed a close friendship and fruitful collaboration with Deneuve.

Schneider never had such a strong and durable partnership with a designer, though she listed him as one of his favourite couturiers – alongside Coco Chanel. Arguably Schneider's most striking costume in *César et Rosalie* is the dress Rosalie wears at her mother's wedding at the beginning of the film. It is a long, black-and-white tartan printed chiffon dress with a slit back (a detail that surreptitiously reveals the skin) and bouffant sleeves. Through the diaphanous fabric we can glimpse that she does not wear a bra. A bow at the collar brings a flowing movement to the dress and complements her bouncy curls (fig. 12). This dress displays a great fit between the designer's flair and Schneider's sense of style and body type: through Saint Laurent's sexy and flamboyant details, Schneider imparted an erotic allure to the dress without falling into excess or vulgarity. The fact that hemlines continued to fall in the first years of the decade after the mini-skirts of the 1960s (Steele, p. 82), played in favour of Schneider who looked at her best wearing floor-length dresses.

Off screen, Schneider was fond of long and flowy dresses in the spirit of what today would be called 'bohemian chic' (adorned with yellow gold jewels), and of psychedelic-patterned or floral print caftans, echoing the late hippie style. The caftan was a staple of 1970s clothing and the ones Saint Laurent created for Schneider for *Les Innocents aux mains sales* (fig. 13) evoke his ethnic-inspired collections of the late 1970s; it also conveys an elegant yet casual style that fits the film's luxurious setting in a villa outside Saint-Tropez with minimalist modern interiors. Analysing each of Schneider's looks from *Les Innocents aux mains sales* could fill a chapter inasmuch as they function as central aspects of the mise-en-scène (her costume changes provide a disguise for her character so that she can perform differently in relation to the men facing her), but I will focus on one attire that bears significance in the construction of Schneider's expression of the glamorous yet vulnerable woman.

Julie is a Saint-Tropez housewife married to a rich, drunken and impotent husband (Rod Steiger). The film opens with a shot of Schneider sunbathing on her stomach and wearing nothing but dark glasses and a sparkling pendant down her back. A kite falls on her buttocks and a young man (Paolo Giusti) appears, looking for his kite. She asks him to take it back and make advances to him; despite the presence of her drunk husband they have sex in the house and then plan his murder. Leaving aside the incongruity and misogyny of this opening, Schneider's clothed body has more significance. Though she suffers physical and sexual abuse, Schneider's character seems to acquire a (very) slight agency through the star's wearing of her costumes. The clothes are part of Julie's

masquerade and could also be considered a defence mechanism. A moment that intertwines those two aspects is when her husband returns (she thought he was dead), rapes her and then pays her. At this point she presents herself to him with curly blonde hair and in a white, floor-length, fluid imperial-style gown (fig. 14). With Schneider's performance in this film based on the progression of her looks, this costume has a dramatic function: this is the character's version of the elegant 'whore' (her husband's word) who tries to regain a semblance of power. Julie has to perform marital prostitution, but she still finds a way to impose herself with exaggerated attributes (the voluminous hair, the overdone makeup, the dramatic cut and symbolic innocence of her white dress) on her abuser.

Schneider's on- and off-screen 1970s looks also included her hairstyle created by Jean-Max Guérin and Alexandre de Paris. Unlike Bardot who developed a small repertoire of spectacular and highly recognisable hairstyles (Vincendeau 2015a), Schneider on- and off-screen changed hers frequently, sometimes radically, going from a shoulder-length wavy cut to a shorter voluminous style with a fringe, at times using accessories (hats, scarfs, headbands), or tying it back in a ponytail or a chignon (here the effect was to clear and frame her face, emphasising her distinctive V-shaped hairline on her forehead; see fig. 15). The colour remained within a relatively natural range, from brown to honey blonde. Schneider's hairstyle in fact mirrored her star image: it was sophisticated and fashionable, but discreet and controlled. In this it differed on the one hand from Bardot's and Deneuve's evidently bleached blond hair, and on the other hand from Jane Birkin's artfully messy hair and girly fringe, or Annie Girardot's practical short haircut.

On the whole, Schneider in the late 1960s and 1970s never adopted an explicitly feminist agenda, neither on screen where her bourgeois image served a conservative and male-oriented discourse, as we saw in the case of the Sautet films, nor off screen. This somewhat changed with her fifth and last film with Sautet in 1978, *Une histoire simple*.

Fig. 10. Schneider's modern look designed by André Courrèges in *Les Choses de la vie*.

Fig. 11. Schneider's 'prostitute' outfits in *Max et les ferrailleurs*.

Fig. 12. Schneider's Yves Saint Laurent dress in *César et Rosalie*.

Fig. 13. Schneider's caftan in *Les Innocents aux mains sales* (1975).

Fig. 14. Schneider's powerful statement in a white dress in *Les Innocents aux mains sales*.

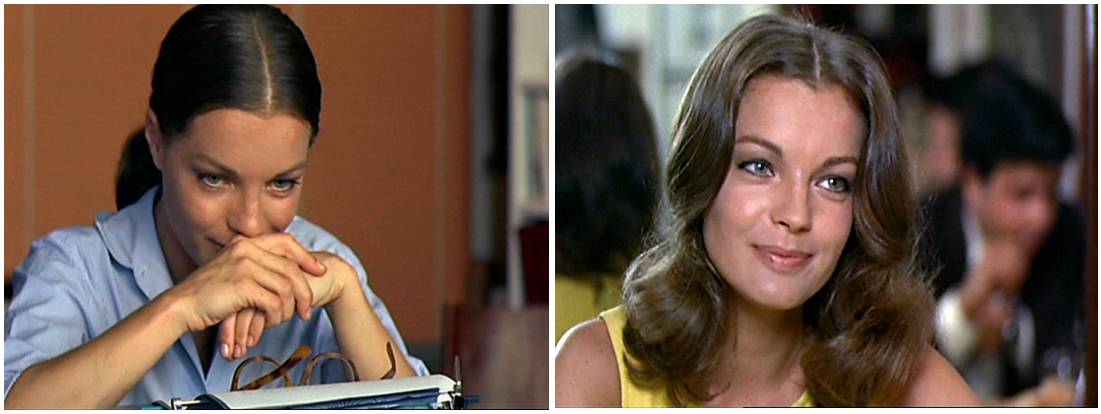

Fig. 15. Two of Schneider's hairstyles in *Les Choses de la vie*.

4. *Une histoire simple*: Schneider and French feminism

With the films mentioned above and other popular titles such as *Vincent, François, Paul et les autres* (1974) and *Mado*, Sautet became the auteur par excellence of male psychology and male friendship, exploring it in all its forms through a certain type of, usually Parisian, middle-class, man. That character is often in his forties, torn between the machismo in which he has been raised and his inability to express his feelings; he is professionally driven but sentimentally weak. Although his female characters are incarnated by glamorous stars like Schneider and usually appear more assured than the men, they are never at the centre of the story. *Une histoire simple* seemed to signal a change in this respect. After her marginal role in *Mado*[5], Schneider was 'tired' of being 'a mere presence' in Sautet's films (Heymann and Delain, 1978, p. 47). The director expressed his 'immense regret, a sort of frustration of having her only so briefly in *Mado*' (Fabre, 1978a). She asked Sautet and Jean-Loup Dabadie to 'write [her] a film about women' as a 'present for her 40th birthday' (Montaigne, 1978, p. 85; Billard, 1978, pp. 175-176). With *Une histoire simple*, Sautet agreed to produce a feminine narrative told through the eyes of Schneider who inspired the story (Billard, p. 176).

The film opens with its heroine's decision to have an abortion. Already the mother of a teenage son from a first marriage, 39-year-old Marie (Schneider) does not wish to carry the child of Serge (Claude Brasseur) whom she does not love anymore and she intends to leave. Rather than the abortion, it is Marie's decision to break up that is unfathomable to Serge because she does not leave him for another man – a woman simply 'does not leave someone like that'. The narrative illustrates the progressive modernity of Schneider's character whose choices to be single and to have an abortion challenge male outdated visions of femininity. *Une histoire simple* was one of the first French films to make a plot point out of an abortion while the Veil Law has only been in place for three years. *Une histoire simple* is also notable for a scene in which Marie's female friends share their different and conflicting points of view about marriage, family and casual sex. The film suggests that men are stuck in their outdated certainties while women are able to adapt. Another rare element in Schneider' filmography is the importance of female friendship and – up to a point – their work. It is with her female colleagues, who are also

[5] Her performance of the alcoholic Hélène received ecstatic reviews: she was 'sublime' for *Le Nouvel Observateur* (25/10/1976), 'sensational' for Robert Chazal in *France-Soir* (27/10/1976), and José-Maria Bescos exclaimed admiringly 'what a Schneider!' in *Pariscope* (27/10/1976).

her friends, that Marie finds support during difficult times. Without ever showing exactly what Marie does (she works with her friends as a designer in a large Parisian company), the film emphasises nevertheless the tensions between work and personal life for women. The narrative is explicitly about Marie following her own desires, rejecting traditionally gendered behaviour, and calmly contemplating abortion. This places it within a body of work portraying female emancipation in French society. Comparing *Une histoire simple* with other films made a few years before, such as Claude Autant-Lara's *Le Journal d'une femme en blanc* (1965) which explores the huge difficulties faced by women's access to contraception and abortion, a milestone has been crossed: having an abortion is now depicted as a simple intervention. And, unlike the female protagonist in Nadine Trintignant's *Mon amour, mon amour* (1967), Marie does not run out of the clinic at the thought of having the abortion. A nice female doctor (Nadine Alari) gently asks Marie some personal questions without shaming her, they make an appointment for the following week, and everything goes smoothly. Nor is Marie seen suffering from post-surgery complications, and the following sequence shows her in her kitchen making tea and resting in bed. She will get back to work the next day. Marie is not traumatised and no one makes her feel guilty. Two things detract from this progressive view of the film.

First, Marie is shown as unhappy, underlined by Schneider's melancholy performance (as expressed through her eyes for instance). The suggestion is that the sadness is caused by the abortion on the one hand, and by the incompleteness of female celibacy on the other. Serge, who cannot let go of Marie, is narratively framed as a looser, and Georges, the man with whom she would like to reconnect, turns her down and choses a younger woman. Visually, *Une histoire simple* looks darker than any other Sautet film with Schneider: her makeup, hairstyle and clothes are dull and morose, a palette of greys and beiges, while Schneider's curly hair is unflattering. Her smile (except at the very end) is her characteristic weary smile of resignation, accompanied by a vulnerable look in her eyes.

Secondly, Sautet and Dabadie in the end privilege traditional representation of women and motherhood. The friends gather with their families during the weekends in Gabrielle's (Arlette Bonnard) country house near Paris. Sautet films the gatherings of the female friends with the same sensitivity and naturalness as he did for his male groups in previous films, yet he puts them in traditional domestic situations – in the kitchen and taking care of the children. None of the women talk about their jobs and, for instance, although Francine is a union representative, it is a man who we see speak at a union

meeting. Although Sautet and Dabadie claimed the film turns the spotlight on a group of professionally active women, they reinforce traditional divisions, with men associated with the public sphere and women with the private sphere. When Marie aborts, she is already a mother, which renders the medical act more acceptable (she has already 'fulfilled' her societal and gendered role). Additionally, all women in the film are mothers (except for Sophie Daumier's character who acts as comic relief). Finally, having briefly reconnected with her former husband, Marie is pregnant again and she decides to raise her child on her own, with the support of Gabrielle who lost her husband by suicide: the future mother is herself supported by a maternal figure. The film thereby places Marie in a 'modern' situation, opting for single motherhood, but de facto contrasts the 'sadness' of her abortion with the joy of motherhood.

The male-dominated French critics agreed with this discourse, praising the independence of Marie and her friends, yet seeing their solitude as 'the price to pay' for these victories – celibacy was an 'old privilege' so far reserved to 'the men-thinkers' (Jardin, 1978). Moreover, Sautet, Dabadie, and Schneider refused to market the film as feminist (Heymann and Delain, 1978, p. 47).[6]Critics felt that, although *Une histoire simple* presents the – white and heteronormative – couple as in jeopardy, Marie finds her 'accomplishment' (Thirard, 1978) in maternity. This is signified by the final shot of Schneider sunbathing in a chaise longue in her friend's garden: with the straps of her cream summer dress down her shoulders, she lifts her skirt up on her thighs and looks at the sun, closes her eyes, a relaxed and radiant expression across her face. Sautet abundantly shared his opinion in the press: to him, women are stronger than men because 'they have maternity', which he considered the 'raison d'être [of a woman] until her last breath' (Fabre, 1978a). He praised himself for putting women 'at centre stage', arguing that they 'carry in them, by their *biological function*, a notion of life and death that is more conscious and more fundamental' (Teisseire, 1978, my emphasis). The conservative ethos betrayed by these declarations (and the film's ending, as discussed above) must be seen as in dialogue with the fact that, at the time, many feminists contested the notion of maternity as 'destiny' for women. *Une histoire simple* therefore reflects the contradictory responses to feminism in late 1970s French society.

[6] Schneider said: 'A feminist story, no. But a story about a woman entangled in the contradictions and aspirations of today' (Montaigne, 1978, p. 85).

Schneider's performance was clearly central to this interpretation and was highly acclaimed; during the 4th César awards ceremony in February 1979, she received her second César award for Best actress for her role. That same year, she was also awarded a special David di Donatello by the Accademia del Cinema Italiano for her performance and the film was nominated in 1980 for an Academy Award in the Best foreign film category. Significantly, many praised Schneider's performance of vulnerability, 'disarray' (Teisseire, 1978), and 'suffering' (de Baroncelli, 1978). The association between Schneider's beauty and her fragility was directly mentioned: 'the singularly perfect face of hope and destitution […] the face of all women' (Jardin, 1978). Thus, interestingly, in her most overt 'woman's narrative', Schneider's performance in *Une histoire simple* projects an image of femininity in need of compassion and of protection. In this respect, Sautet's celebration of Schneider as his muse is disconcerting at best, and alarming at worst. The filmmaker was a liberal, sophisticated, and modern man in many ways (Binh and Rabourdin, 2005; Boujut, 2014)[7], yet his female characters as embodied by Schneider run the gamut of old-fashioned ideas of woman as mistress (Hélène), prostitute (Lily), fickle seductress (Rosalie) or mother (Marie). He claimed that Schneider was the 'synthesis of all women', praising her 'thirst for moral purity' (*Le Nouvel Observateur*, 27/11/1978). In those formative and crucial years of the women's movement, Sautet's depictions of women on a pedestal – as morally 'superior' – spoke of an outdated patriarchal ideology, while it reflected the moral panic that accompanied women's progress in society at the time, especially regarding the control of their bodies and reproduction. Schneider's star persona, in its combination of attractiveness and fragility, played a key role in this process.

Off screen, Schneider's personal relation to feminism was complex. She was, like many European film stars, involved, albeit discreetly, in public debates. Her only overt feminist action was when she made her position regarding abortion clear. In June 1971 and alongside 373 other German-speaking women, she acknowledged having had an abortion by adding her name to the list of signatories to the German equivalent of the French '343 Manifesto' entitled 'Wir haben abgetrieben!' ('We had abortions!') in *Stern* magazine; and she appeared on the cover (fig. 16). For admitting an abortion, Schneider

[7] The love triangle of *César et Rosalie* was inspired by Sautet's own polyamorous relationship with his wife Graziella Escojido and another woman who would have been Stéphane Jardin according to her son Alexandre Jardin who wrote about it in his book *Ma mère avait raison* (2017).

faced criminal charges in Hamburg and risked a penalty fine and a five-year prison sentencing. In an open letter published on 12th July in the *Nouvel Observateur*, Jeanne Moreau (who signed the French manifesto in April) supported Schneider: 'Socially, our freedom is already completely alienated and it is scandalous that the freedom to control our own bodies may expose us to legal prosecutions' (cited in Moireau, 2011). The charges against Schneider (and many other German women) were dropped – the investigation unveiled that hundreds of women sent letters admitting their own abortion to the West German seat of the pro-choice movement.

Beyond this vital question of reclaiming one's own body agency, Schneider had an ambiguous perspective on women's emancipation. In the mid-1960s, she constantly went back and forth between what she called her 'need for strength [in a man]': 'I need a man who makes me violence, who throws me on my knees […], [a] stronger [man] should take care of me, bring me to heel, break me to the bone' (Schneider and Seydel, 1989, p. 206), and her own desire for independence, notably in relation to her love for her work and her personal ambition in developing a successful career. She listed 'private life, the person with whom one lives' as the very 'first condition for a woman to be happy' (interview for *Pathé magazine*, 03/02/1971) although she defended the choice for women to work (she said many times that she could not stop working). Her case illustrated the contradictions of the modern woman in 1970s French (and European) society that demanded a feminine ideal capable of assuming multiple roles – domestic, and professional. There was also a misunderstanding in terms of the vocabulary used to defend the feminist cause (it is still the case): Schneider *technically* agreed with the concept of emancipation and was, in fact, as a privileged white woman in Europe, living an emancipated life, though she always dismissed the word ('this emancipation-thing, I found it pretty false, I don't agree with it'). She insisted on the reductive and essentialist notion that 'a woman has to stay a woman', i.e. 'I would not submit in matter of love, but I would satisfy to the man's demands, as long as they do not deteriorate into tyranny; [a] woman who loves can' (Schneider and Seydel, pp. 210-211). This was (and remains) a common position taken by many women at the time. Equality does not mean sameness but, as Christine Bard has shown (1999), the anti-feminist discourse commonly caricatured feminism as either man-hating or encouraging women to 'become men'. The evolution of French cinema over the 1970s pushed the star to change her image but also to re-evaluate her status as a woman.

When her career in France took a successful turn with *Les Choses de la vie*, Schneider continued to defend domesticity but emphasised that it had to be a woman's choice. She explained that she 'absolutely wanted [a family and home]' and that this decision was her 'real life'. She publicly admitted having not reconciled her professional life with her private life, and that she was 'two different women' (interview by Jacques Chancel, 13/03/1970). She was considered an independent and professionally successful woman, and she personally shared her professional ambition with the press (Billard, 1978, p. 176). However, in line with Christine Geraghty's point that female celebrities are always brought back to the private sphere (2000, p. 196), journalists tended to emphasise her vulnerable femininity that was considered 'the most beautiful virtue' (Chancel, 13/03/1970), and they asked questions indicative of the era's sexist conception of women, i.e. her role as a wife and a mother. She was also relentlessly described in media as very dependent on men – her two husbands, but also her directors, whose support and approval she looked for on sets (*Le Nouvel Observateur*, 27/11/1978). As was the case for a growing number of women as the decade unfolded, Schneider was divorced and remarried by the mid-1970s. In line with her on-screen image, she continued to defend the unifying value of having a family: 'I think that [family] is the most beautiful [thing], but I refuse that women be machines to make children or the dishes. I refuse it as an obligation, or a sort of function' (Fabre, 1978b). She again insisted on the importance of women's freedom to choose ('It has to be a choice'). From her film roles to her own pronouncements, Schneider's attitude to gender and feminism was thus riven with contradictions, created by a range of factors: the conflicted views of feminism in society, the rapidly changing social mores, the tensions between the stars' own views and her need to adapt to the French – largely male and often misogynist – film establishment, and the ideologically conservative media.

Fig. 16. The cover for the 'Wir haben abgetrieben!' manifesto. Schneider's photograph is right below the star-logo on the left hand-side (*Stern*, June 1971).

Conclusion

Schneider's immense popularity as a 'French' star was (and still is) rooted in her characters' apparent emancipation and independence in Sautet's films, which appears to coincide with the 1970s' progressive mentality. Hélène is ambivalent about marriage, Rosalie makes very clear that César is no more important than any other man that she had before, and Marie aborts without consulting her companion and she ultimately decides to go through with another pregnancy without involving the father. And yet, Schneider's characterisation as a modern woman was deceptive as it was only the *semblance* of modernity that was depicted and promoted in various media texts. All in all, a soft misogyny veiled the narratives and Schneider's on-screen persona remained fairly conventional and unthreatening, offering little potential for transgression within mainstream French cinema and society.

Schneider was contemporary with the rising voice of feminism in film and with French stars such as Annie Girardot, Marlène Jobert and Miou-Miou, whose personas projected an aura of 'ordinariness', in part through their naturalistic looks and performance styles, and were very much 'of their time', offering positive visions of 'popular feminism' in their films (Jeancolas, 1979, p. 271; Vincendeau, 2008, pp. 222-235). By contrast, Schneider represented a hesitant modernity and she was more

comparable to Catherine Deneuve – both of them in a way 'bypassed feminism' with their glamour and 'out of touch' upper-middle-class personas. In that sense, the 'new' Schneider in 1970s France was far from being *the* new woman. Her successful roles in Sautet's films built the feminine myth of a peaceful cohabitation between past and present, between classicism and modernity, thus following the thread that ran since the beginning of her career – her seductiveness allied with vulnerability maintained a traditional hierarchy of the sexes. These features also explain her triumph in her Occupation films that I will explore in the next chapter – those narratives projected resistance to women's emancipation in France's national past. They also explored Schneider's ambiguous relationship with Germany and Austria, emphasising her Germanic identity in a way that developed a complex relation to the memory of World War II.

Chapter II. Schneider's Occupation films

Introduction

This chapter analyses Schneider's roles and performances in films depicting the rise of European totalitarianisms and the German Occupation of France during World War II. Although there are few of them, this cycle of films holds an important place in Schneider's French career as it was decisive in the shaping of her persona in the 1970s, capitalising on the split in her own person between West Germany and France. They are: *Le Train* / *The Train* (Pierre Granier-Deferre, 1973), *Le Vieux fusil* / *The Old gun* (Robert Enrico, 1975), *Une femme à sa fenêtre* / *A Woman at her window* (Pierre Granier-Deferre, 1976), *Gruppenbild mit Dame* / *Group portrait with a lady* (Aleksandar Petrović, 1977), and Schneider's final film *La Passante du Sans-Souci* / *The Passerby* (Jacques Rouffio, 1982). Because these films were shaped by the larger issue of the relations between French cinema and Western European war memory, the first part of this chapter focuses on the broader historical and memorial shifts from 1945 to the early 1980s in the French context, while the second section examines Schneider's romantic and tragic roles in Occupation films and how she gave them a particular 'twist' due to her Germanic origins.

1. French cinema and memories of World War II

The corpus of Occupation films made in France since 1945 is substantial and French cinema played its part in building the cultural and national memories of World War II. French cinematic representations of the period varied and the changes are often significant in respect of French official discourse relating to World War II and national memory. It is enlightening to study the French films that achieved popular success – René Clément's *La Bataille du rail* and *Paris brûle-t-il?* (1966), Claude Autant-Lara's *La Traversée de Paris* (1956), Gérard Oury's *La Grande Vadrouille* (1966), Louis Malle's *Lacombe Lucien* (1974) and, in Schneider's case, *Le Vieux fusil* and *La Passante du Sans-Souci* – as an indication of a consensus of opinion over the 'historically correct' thinking at given moments in history. Occupation films have also engendered fierce debate, suggesting that the German Occupation remains a sensitive topic long after the war. In this regard, *Lacombe Lucien*, one of the first films to deal with collaboration, is emblematic for it was subjected to violent controversies, as was *Le Vieux fusil* (see below).

1.1. 1945-1970s: French cinema and official war memory

In the aftermath of World War II and until the 1970s, the memory of war in France was tied to political concerns. The French historian Henry Rousso dedicates a section of his seminal book *Le Syndrome de Vichy* (1987) to the on-screen representation of the war and Occupation, noting that nearly 200 films were made on the subject between 1944 and 1986 (many more have been made since). Statistically this represents 7% of annual French film production, or about a dozen films each year during the period covered by Rousso.

Immediately after the end of the war and after the period known as 'épuration' ('purification')[1], the issue of memory and responsibilities was replaced by the urgency of reconstruction. Amnesty laws were passed in 1947. In 1953, one of them singled out Alsatians soldiers (French nationals whose region had been annexed by Germany in 1940) forced into the German army who participated in the massacre of 642 civilians in Oradour-sur-Glane in 1944, on which *Le Vieux fusil* was loosely based.[2] Charles de Gaulle, France's President until 1946 (and again from 1958 to 1969), and whose influence on French public opinion remained preponderant, pushed forward a narrative of national healing. According to this perspective, the Vichy regime and its collaborationist policies were a parenthesis in the history of the Republic.[3] French cinema consolidated the myth of a wholly resistant France, which Rousso calls the 'Resistancialist myth' (1987; Rousso and Conan, 1994). Subjected to multiple pressures (political, economic, social), including censorship, films had to be cautious when addressing the topic of German Occupation (Lindeperg, 1997; Jacquet, 2004).

Then, after a peak in 1946, French production dropped drastically: only 11 films about the war and the German Occupation were distributed between 1947 and 1958.

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[1] Also called 'legal purge', the term defines the wave of official (and unofficial) trials that followed the Liberation of France.

[2] For more on the Oradour massacre see Sarah Farmer's books *Oradour: arrêt sur mémoire* (1994) and *Martyred village: commemorating the 1944 massacre at Oradour-sur-Glane* (1999).

[3] Historians Robert Aron and Georgette Elgey (*Histoire de Vichy*, 1954) developed the idea that Pétain did what he could to soften the condition of the French people during the war. This is the 'shield and sword' thesis that presents General de Gaulle and Marshal Pétain tacitly acting together to defend France, the latter being the shield preserving France, including with a policy of collaboration (which was, according to the thesis, simulated), until the sword (de Gaulle) was strong enough to defeat Nazi Germany. This view is widely contested (Le Groignec, 1998).

Rousso calls this the 'discretion of the Fourth Republic' and explains that 'cinema [in those years] seems to be withdrawn, in reserve, avoiding the subject' (1987, p. 274). Still, French films began to make some alterations to the one-dimensional glorification of the Resistance made after the Liberation and some unsavoury characters appeared on screen.[4] In line with official war memory however, and despite the mediatisation of the extermination camps' discovery and the Nuremberg trials, representations of Jewish experience and persecution emerged with difficulty. The specificity of the Jewish Holocaust was muted in the global memory of the deportation, as seen in the short documentary *Nuit et Brouillard* (Alain Resnais, 1956) – although the film had the merit of showing concentration camps to the public, the role of French authorities in the deportation was censored and the word 'Jewish' is only mentioned once (Lindeperg 2007).

When de Gaulle returned to power in 1958, the production of World War II films in France was at its lowest. The numbers for the following years seem to confirm that there was a 'de Gaulle effect'. According to Sylvie Lindeperg, ten Occupation films were made in 1959 and 70 films (including documentaries) in the next decade. In short, French cinema took on a more Gaullist and military tone. Two fiction films chimed particularly with the new historical doxa: Clément's *Paris brûle-t-il?* in 1966 (Schneider was part of the film's international cast, but her scene was cut; her husband Harry Meyen plays a Nazi Lieutenant), and *L'Armée des ombres* (Jean-Pierre Melville, 1969) which has given rise to much debate in terms of its Gaullism (Rousso, 1987; Lindeperg, 1997; Vincendeau, 2003).

French cinema also approached the Occupation though popular comedies in the 1960s: *Babette s'en va-t-en guerre* (Christian-Jaque, 1959), *La Vie de château* (Jean-Paul Rappeneau, 1966), and *La Grande Vadrouille* (Gérard Oury, 1966). In the 1970s the *7e compagnie* and *Bidasses* series were hugely popular.[5] These films' main characters represent the 'average French person' struggling with History, which according to Lindeperg brought 'chauvinistic satisfaction' (1997, p. 372) to French audiences. The

[4] *Les Portes de la nuit* (Marcel Carné, 1946), *Manon* (Henri-Georges Clouzot, 1949), *La Traversée de Paris* (Claude Autant-Lara, 1956) all include collaborationists and black market traffickers.

[5] The *films de bidasses* are comedies on conscription soldiers generally silly and little motivated. See *Où est passé la 7e compagnie?* (Robert Lamoureux, 1973) and *Les Bidasses s'en vont en guerre* (Claude Zidi, 1974), the firsts of the genre.

French heroes, always resourceful and full of common sense, do not have any trouble deceiving dumb German soldiers. However, as the Gaullist period came to an end, the arrival of new generations of artists, filmmakers, and historians who had not experienced the war, as well as the opening of French and West German national archives[6] brought a momentous transformation.

1.2. The 1970s in France: new historical approaches and the mode rétro

The civil unrest of May 1968 and the arrival of a younger generation of researchers who focused more on collaboration than Resistance changed the perspective on World War II.[7] The groundbreaking documentary *Le Chagrin et la Pitié*, directed by Marcel Ophüls, played an influential role. Commissioned by French television in 1967, the film was interrupted by the May 68 events, then produced by French, Swiss and West German television and shot in 1969 (it was distributed in cinemas in 1971 after being banned from French television). Using interviews with collaborators and Resistance fighters from Clermont-Ferrand (Auvergne) who comment on collaboration, *Le Chagrin et la Pitié* was one of the first films to engage with French collective memory of the Occupation (Rousso, 1987, pp. 133-134). By breaking the false narrative of an entirely resistant France, it played an important role in the emergence of a new approach to the Vichy regime and of a new era of Occupation memory. The film's interviewees give a strong impression of authenticity, which leads historian Annette Wieviorka to declare that France had entered the 'witness era' (1998).

The 1970s were also the time of the revival of Vichy memory, of the rise of 'négationisme' (denialism) that refuted the existence of the Shoah and of the foundation

[6] While the focus of this section is French cinema, other academics have expanded their study to broader contexts; see for example Pierre Sorlin in his *European cinemas, European societies* 1939-1990 that has a comparative chapter on the emergence of Occupation and Resistance films in European cinema (1991, pp. 52-80).

[7] The historiographic shift in the early 1970s was partly due to foreign historians and to American Robert Paxton in particular who had access to German records and documents seized by US authorities. Paxton's 1972 book *Vichy France* (translated in French in 1973) revealed that the Vichy government was eager to collaborate with Nazi Germany and did not practice 'passive resistance'. Studies now acknowledge that the French authorities took part in the Holocaust (Jean-Pierre Azéma with *De Munich à la Libération: 1938-1944* in 1979, Henry Rousso with *Le Syndrome de Vichy* in 1987, and *Vichy, un passé qui ne passe pas* with Eric Conan in 1994).

of the far-right political party Front National.[8] In parallel, there was a strong resurgence of Shoah memory with many French historians publishing works that centred on the Holocaust and highlighted the anti-Jewish policies of Vichy. As I shall explore, events related to 'négationisme' (and, in some cases, neo-Nazism) were of paramount importance for Schneider's decision to accept certain roles, her approach to her characters, and in particular her desire to develop *La Passante du Sans-Souci*.

Then, with re-evaluations in the 1970s of France's role in the war, a new trend in film (and in literature) emerged. Rousso identifies nearly 45 films about the Occupation made between 1974 and 1978. He divides these into four categories: the 'prosecutors' (such as *Le Chagrin et la Pitié*), the 'chroniclers' (films that give an account of the atmosphere of the time, e.g. *Le Sauveur*, *Le Train*), the 'aesthetes' (*Lacombe Lucien* tells the enrolment of a young man in the Milice[9]), and the 'opportunists' (the aforementioned *Bidasses* series for example). French films about the German Occupation – and the heritage genre at large – present an array of recurring characteristics: an historical or literary inspiration, a display of vintage costumes and décors, usually high production values, classical visual style, and the presence of stars to attract a large audience (Austin, 1996, 142). These motifs are indeed present in Schneider's French films about the German Occupation, and this chapter will endeavour to establish her personal contribution to the 'genre'. The polemical term '*mode rétro*' (retro style) applied to these films by some French film critics, indicates a subgenre of heritage cinema about the German Occupation (and more generally Nazism), and it is in that sense that I use the term throughout this chapter. Its original coining in the early 1970s, notably the *Cahiers du cinéma*'s editorial team, was meant to be derogatory (Atack, 2016, p. 336). The critics sneered at the films' glamorous and nostalgic aesthetics, which they saw as a fixation on appearance and surface, such as fashion of the 1930s and 1940s. They blamed the films' shallow revival of the past, and denounced their 'fascination for the morbid' (Domenach, 1974) – as in the discomfort caused by *Il Portiere di notte* (Liliana Cavani, 1974), a film that considers Nazism as a sexual perversion (Impey, 2011). In fact, Schneider turned

[8] Some FN members lay claim to the 'National Revolution' of the Vichy regime and are close to negationist and anti-Semite milieus.

[9] The Milice was a paramilitary force of the Vichy regime. For more on *Lacombe Lucien* see Harry Roderick Kedward's contribution in Ginette Vincendeau and Susan Hayward's collective book *French films: text and contexts* (2000), pp. 227-239.

down Charlotte Rampling's role in the film, as well as Cavani's project of an adaptation of Frank Wedekind's *Lulu* cycle (a two-play series). These roles would have altered Schneider's persona in the direction of soft porn, and she was careful at the time to maintain her *image de marque* (her 'brand') as dignified and glamourous.

Rousso considers that it was particularly during those years that 'cinema precedes, anticipates and, as a result, contributes to provoking a change of mentality' (1987, p. 275). The *rétro* Occupation films challenged the heroism of the French Resistance and emphasised the ambiguity of the times (Kedward, 2000, pp. 228-229; Temple and Witt, 2004, p. 188). The persecution of the Jewish people, in particular in France, took a greater place in French cinema, appearing in popular films such as *Le Vieil homme et l'enfant* (Claude Berri, 1967), *Les Guichets du Louvre* (Michel Mitrani, 1974), and *Monsieur Klein* (Joseph Loosey, 1976). Those films often insist on Vichy's role in the Nazi deportation of the Jews of France, but many of them also highlight the actions of the French who helped the Jews. Schneider's *La Passante* is one of them.

Finally, Rousso sees in the 1980s a time of trivialization and growing consensus: '[…] cinema no longer plays, if not for a few exceptions, the role of breaking taboos' (p. 270). Occupation cinema in the 1980s instead crystallised French collective memory. *Le Dernier métro* (François Truffaut, 1981), starring Catherine Deneuve and Gérard Depardieu, emphasises a consensual heritage. It was both hugely popular and critically acclaimed (with ten Césars, it was the most honoured film since the creation of the award). It is against this context that I shall now consider how Schneider's position between French cinema and her Germanic persona afforded her a special place in French film memories of the Occupation.

2. Romy Schneider's Occupation films

In the context of the debates France signalled above, Schneider's decision to work in French films and live in France[10] was significant. The fact that she was German was, unsurprisingly, capitalised upon by French films about the German Occupation with

[10] Schneider definitively moved back to Paris in 1973 and separated from Harry Meyen shortly afterwards (the divorce was pronounced in July 1975); she started a new relationship with her French private secretary Daniel Biasini whom she married in Berlin in December 1975 (she was six-month pregnant but had a miscarriage shortly after the wedding). She bought a property in Ramatuelle (southern France) in 1976 and her daughter Sarah Biasini was born in July 1977.

characters that positioned her as a victim. This image was at times combined with her own Germanness and/or her characters' Jewishness. Invariably though, her victimhood was bound to her beauty: Schneider heightened the pathos of her performances and the tragic fates of her characters by joining Germanness, glamour and melancholy. As well as relating to the specificities of French national memory of the Occupation during the 1970s, I would argue that the actress's projection of vulnerability was at least as important as her national identity in terms of her triumph in such films.

I structure the rest of this chapter in three parts, each illustrating a significant aspect of Schneider's image in Occupation cinema. I start with *Le Train* (and, to a lesser extent, on *Une femme à sa fenêtre*, both directed by Pierre Granier-Deferre in 1973 and 1976 respectively), and what I consider Schneider's most political roles. I then turn to *Le Vieux fusil* (Robert Enrico, 1975), where her role is arguably more 'passive', but that represents a turning point for Schneider's persona as an icon of beautiful suffering. I conclude with *La Passante du Sans-Souci* (Jacques Rouffio, 1982), Schneider's last film that allows me to explore her image in the West German context, along with her role in *Gruppenbild mit Dame* (Aleksandar Petrović, 1977).

2.1. Schneider's political positioning in the 1970s French cultural discourse on the Occupation

In *Le Train*, adapted from the eponymous 1961 novel by Georges Simenon[11], Schneider is the mysterious passenger Anna on one of the last trains leaving northern France during the May 1940 exodus after the Nazi invasion of France. Without luggage, dressed in a black dress and a grey tailored jacket, she furtively boards the last cattle coach and encounters Julien (Jean-Louis Trintignant), a radio technician who boarded the train with his pregnant wife and young daughter, seated in a passenger coach at the front of the train. As Julien is separated from his family after the convoy is halved, he and Anna begin to develop feelings for one another. After a bombing one night, they make love in the moving train amongst the other passengers. Anna tells Julien that she is German and Jewish and that she fled her country and found refuge in Belgium before having to be on the run again. She explains that the Nazis plan to 'eliminate us [the Jews] in camps, […] out of cold, hunger, and fear'. Anna's Jewishness and other allusions to the horrors to

[11] *Le Train* was Granier-Deferre's third adaption of Simenon's novels: he directed *La Veuve Couderc* and *Le Chat*, both released in 1971 and adapted from Simenon's eponymous novels.

come to the Jewish people during the Holocaust were added to the script – there is no mention of her religion or culture in the original novel; moreover, no sources allow me to establish whether or not the character's Jewishness was added at Schneider's demand. This narrative element strengthened Schneider's Nazi victim image. Anna and Julien part ways in La Rochelle, in the hospital where Julien's wife gives birth to a son, and only meet again three years later when he is summoned by the French police. The inspector shows him identity papers in the name of his wife but with Anna's photo (arriving in La Rochelle he had registered Anna under his wife's name), but he denies knowing her. He learns her real name – Anna Küpfer – and that she is suspected of being a member of the Resistance. The inspector then brings her in to the room. At first, Anna and Julien remain silent, giving the impression that they do not know each other, but when Julien is about to leave, cleared of all suspicion, he changes his mind, approaches her and tenderly caresses her cheek. Doing so, he implicitly recognises her and condemns them both to death.

This epilogue is significant as it deviates from the source material. At the end of Simenon's novel, Julien re-encounters Anna, who asks refuge for a British pilot and herself for a few days as they are being pursued by the Gestapo; Julien hesitates and Anna does not insist. A month later, he reads her name on a list of spies who have been shot. Simenon's more cynical ending thus has Julien betray Anna and survive, whereas in the film, he remains faithful to their love and signs his own death warrant. Opportunely, this presents a more romantic but also an upstanding and heroic French male character to audiences; Gilles Jacob in *L'Express* praised this decision, calling the finale 'exemplary' (05/11/1973).

There are two possible interpretations (and competing evidence) of the motives underlying this change. Screenwriter Pascal Jardin, the son of notorious collaborationist politician Jean Jardin, may have wished to absolve his name of the taint of collaboration[12] (and possibly of association with Simenon's anti-Semitic and collaborationist activities[13]). On the other hand, it was reported in the press that no one from the crew

[12] See Pascal Jardin's novel *Le Nain Jaune* (1978), and Pierre Assouline's 1986 biography of Jean Jardin *Une éminence grise: Jean Jardin (1904-1976)*.

[13] During the war and while he was staying in Vendée (western France), Simenon was a representative of the Belgian State for Belgian refugees, but he refused to help those who were Jewish. The agreements he made with the German-controlled French film production company Continental Films earned him some hassle at the Liberation. He fled to Canada, avoiding French justice and the National Committee of

knew for sure the end of the film until shooting it, and that it was Trintignant, deeming his role thankless, who opted for his character's more noble behaviour. Either way, this change inscribes the film more fully within a Resistancialist narrative, and places Trintignant in the favourable light of projecting a chivalric masculinity. Pierre Granier-Deferre claimed to be uninterested in making socio-political cinema; he argued that his principal subject was 'a love story', a couple, with the socio-political element functioning merely as 'background' (*Le Quotidien de Paris*, 05/11/1976), but *Le Train* is in effect a political and partisan film. Granier-Deferre personally experienced the May 1940 exodus and his film shows the contrast between the dramatic events of the war and the daily life of the escapees. He also interposed news archive material of the time that showed Nazi attacks and bombings, without any comment, but with a distressing and ominous music (composed by Philippe Sarde), enhancing the horror and the misery of the war.

This solemn tone, as well as the significantly different ending, were also reflected in the casting of Schneider and in her subdued performance. In Simenon's novel, Anna is Czech, but in Granier-Deferre's film she is German and her accent is recognised by the passengers, raising suspicions that however do not last long – the men are busy noticing Anna's beauty and propositioning her. Almost a decade after her Hollywood films, Schneider performs again the mysterious and alluring foreign woman who alters the course of the male protagonist's life. Indeed, the novel and the film's central theme, more than the war itself, is a man's expectation of an event that would change the course of his monotonous life (a recurrent Simenon theme) – here the encounter with Anna, set in motion by the Nazi invasion.

While Schneider's Germanness was largely irrelevant to her success in the Sautet films (it was occasionally mentioned), it played a central role in her Occupation films. Although it was relatively rare for a Germanic actor to perform the 'good German' in French films, there are examples that include Marlene Dietrich, Hildegard Knef, Curd Jürgens and Hardy Krüger; although those last two, like many German-speaking actors in foreign productions, were also at times assigned antagonistic roles, i.e. Nazis (see

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purification of literary men in Paris that was investigating his literary and film successes during the Occupation. See Pierre Assouline (1992), *Simenon: biographie*, and Michel Carly (2005), *Simenon, les années secrètes: Vendée, 1940-1945* (2005).

Phillips and Vincendeau, 2006, p. 268).[14] *Le Train* was not Schneider's first World War II film: as discussed (Part II, chapter 2), she had previously appeared in *The Victors* (Foreman, 1963), *The Cardinal* (Preminger, 1963), and *Triple Cross* (Young, 1966). But in none of them are her characters victims suffering at the hands of the Nazis. They suffer from the war (Régine in *The Victors* becomes a prostitute, Annemarie in *The Cardinal* ends up in jail, and the Countess in *Triple Cross* has to flee to Portugal), but their national identity or religion are not specifically targeted – i.e. they are not Jewish.

Schneider's characters in her 1970s Occupation films are, by contrast, direct Nazi victims – they are either Jewish or part of the Resistance and, for the most part, are brutally murdered. These deliberate career choices, in addition to events in her private life (her husband's ancestry and camp imprisonment, her children's Hebrew names David and Sarah), positioned Schneider as a redemptive figure for both German- and French-speaking audiences. On and off screen she embodied the 'perfect' victim, disapproved of by the former and celebrated by the latter. The reasons for this are to be found in the historical relationship between Germany and France, which echoed Schneider's personal relation to the two nations and to these roles in particular. For centuries, France and Germany were nations and cultures engaged in a dialectic marked by aggression and distrust, but also by cultural fascination and mutual respect (Gassen and Hurst, 1991, p. 5; Hawes, 2017, pp. 80-81). With regards to the French-German military conflicts of the two World Wars (as well as the 1870 Franco-Prussian War), the relationship between the neighbouring nations were (and still are) often reduced to interaction between victory and defeat, humiliation and revenge, and deeply embedded historical fears. The French and West German cultural amity was slow to be restored after 1945, yet always aiming towards reconstruction under the European union project. Schneider, as an Austro-German émigré in Paris, situated herself as a paradigmatic example of this charged relationship between the two countries, and notably as a focal point regarding the tragedy of the Holocaust. This Franco-German memorial discourse merged with her off-screen persona, intertwining Schneider's own trajectory as a woman with her family history and

[14] As ironically illustrated by Harry Meyen's case, Schneider's Jewish husband, who survived deportation in a concentration camp during the war and performed a Nazi Lieutenant in two of Schneider's films: *Paris brûle-t-il?* and *Triple Cross*. For more on the 'good German' characterisation see Pól Ó Dochartaigh and Christiane Schönfeld (2013), *Representing the 'good German' in literature and culture after 1945: altruism and moral ambiguity*.

her native country's difficult recent past. Speaking of her role in *Le Train* in an interview with the *Deutsches Allgemeines Sonntagsblatt*, she explained: 'In all of my recent films, this is the role with which I agree the most. [This] woman acts, thinks and loves as I would have. I accepted the role to send a message to the Nazi guys who still have a say in Germany […]. I identify with the role' (15/12/1974).

The rest of this chapter tries to elucidate the complex cultural, social, and personal dynamics to which Schneider refers, in particular her comments on her roles in which she represents the Jewish people. Although raised a Catholic, Schneider never expressed nor shared any religious conviction. She began developing political opinions in the 1960s when she worked with and met people who influenced her political consciousness. Lilli Palmer, Schneider's co-star in *Girls in Uniform* in 1958, had to flee Germany for Paris and London with her family in 1934 after Hitler's rise to power because of their Jewish heritage (she returned to Germany in 1954). In France, Schneider met Marlene Dietrich through Orson Welles in 1962. Dietrich was an outspoken critic of the Nazis; she refused to return to Germany to become a film star of the Third Reich. She applied for US citizenship in 1937 and was a fervent supporter of the Allied troops during the war. It is said (documentary *Un jour, un destin*, 2010) that she revealed to Schneider the horrors committed by the Nazi regime to which Schneider's parents and paternal grandmother were close and even benefited from (see Part I). The next year, Schneider met Otto Preminger who allegedly helped her better comprehend the rise of fascism in Europe. Thus, through personal and professional contacts and through her film roles in the 1970s Schneider became more politicised regarding German fascism and she broadcast her opinions through the press. In doing so, she added her voice to the chorus of a younger and so-called 'second generation' (the children of Nazi perpetrators and sympathisers) who experienced difficulties with *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*. As we shall see, her voice in this respect would only grow louder as the decade unfolded.

Three years after *Le Train*, Schneider worked again with Granier-Deferre in *Une femme à sa fenêtre*, in which she performed the title character, Margot Santorini. Set in 1936 Athens, the film paints Margot as a wealthy and beautiful Austrian-born Marquise, cynical and idle, married to the penniless playboy and Italian diplomat Rico (Umberto Orsini, already seen alongside Schneider in *César et Rosalie* and *Ludwig*). They feel affection for each other but the romantic Margot expects more from life than her string of suitors, amongst whom is rich French industrialist and her friend Malfosse (Philippe Noiret). While her husband does not hide his extra-marital affair, Margot remains faithful,

but bored and without purpose amongst her peers who enjoy the privileges of their class, until she passionately falls in love with the fugitive Michel Boutros (Victor Lanoux), who takes refuge in her room at dawn on 5th of August, after the coup of General Metaxas, who declared martial law and established the totalitarian '5th of August regime' in Greece (1936-1941). Boutros is a dashing communist activist pursued by the police. His bravery and idealism seduce Margot. Rico is tolerant of her attachment to the rebel and they plan to help Boutros escape and after a few days, Margot decides to escape with him. At the end, the narrative jumps to 1945 France after the Liberation when Rico and Malfosse try to find Margot who had disappeared after entrusting Rico with her daughter. They discover that she was deported and probably assassinated. In 1967, the daughter of Boutros and Margot (also performed by Schneider dressed in 1970s clothes), returns to Greece where her parents met. Like *Le Train*, *Une femme à sa fenêtre* is a literary adaptation. The eponymous novel by Pierre Drieu la Rochelle was written in 1929; his story was therefore set during the Second Hellenic Republic a period in which he leant towards socialism (he published his political essay *Socialisme fasciste* in 1934), although he is remembered as the fascist and collaborator that he became in occupied France.

Une femme à sa fenêtre contains much more resonant political undertones than its source material. The screenwriter, Spanish left-wing writer Jorge Semprún, intentionally modified the time setting of Drieu La Rochelle's novel to bring his narrative closer to the rise of European fascisms and World War II. Added to the film was Austria's fascism, directly related to Schneider's identity. Margot shares with Rico the reason why she feels so drawn to Boutros: she recalls that two years earlier, when she was in Vienna, 'the troops of Engelbert Dollfuss crushed the workers' militia… I didn't understand, but I was horrified. Now this story makes sense'. Schneider's character also makes narrative use of her Germanic origins with the film's references to the Austrian Civil War, also known as the February Uprising, four days of skirmishes between socialists and the Austrian Army in February 1934. Schneider also speaks a few words of German, which are chosen to dismiss Nazi politics. To a German diplomat (Carl Möhner) who raises his glass to her in honour of the forthcoming *Anschluss* she coldly and loftily responds that she does not find this perspective desirable. Moreover, the disappearance and death of Margot depart from the source material to bolster Schneider's Nazi victim image (the ending of Drieu la Rochelle's novel remains open and hopeful as the lovers promise to meet in Patras).

Une femme à sa fenêtre was in line with Schneider's image of glamorous upper-class sophistication, but critics were divided regarding its visual style. Some considered

that the film's impressive collection of historical costumes, fancy cars, immaculate tennis courts, and its ornamental quality detracted from its political message, and others saw it as a betrayal of Semprún's politics ('it is a right-wing film [made] to seduce left-wing intellectuals', *Politique Hebdo*, 22/11/1976). The tension picked up by critics had its source in the film's inception: as for *Le Train*, Granier-Deferre denied making a political film[15], while it was clear for Semprún and producer Albina du Boisrouvray that he was writing a political story (Chazal, 1976).

Drieu la Rochelle, makes a brief appearance as a character (played by Jean Martin) at the end of the film when Rico and Malfosse investigate Margot's whereabouts. He informs them that Margot has been arrested and they come to the conclusion that she has probably died. Drieu's comments on Schneider's character are significant. Immediately after he pronounces the words 'deported in a camp somewhere in Germany', he continues: 'She was beautiful, wasn't' she? I remember a sort of inner flame, a stubborn, almost desperate, *joie de vivre*. What a waste'. Here, a character impersonating a man known in mid-1970s France for his sympathy for the Nazi regime makes a direct association between Schneider's character's tragic fate and the actress's beauty. This is paramount in understanding Schneider's image of the vulnerable woman: the body beautiful was never very far from the body brutalised by Germany.

Regardless of how unchallenging those two political roles were to any 'historically correct' French narrative about the memory of the Occupation, the Jewishness (in *Le Train*) and Austrianness (in *Une femme à sa fenêtre*) of Schneider's characters clearly associate her with the figure of the victim, turning her into an alluring icon of suffering. Pursuing her work in Sautet's films, Schneider's image in Occupation films continued to build on her physical beauty, this time closely related to a cinematic treatment of the star, in particular a pervasive use of prolonged facial close-ups, starting with *Le Vieux fusil*.

2.2. The beautiful a-temporal victim

Le Vieux fusil was Schneider's biggest success of her French career: with 3,365,471 spectators, the film ranked fifth at the French box office in 1975 (Simsi, 2012, p. 40), consolidating Schneider's star status in France. With hindsight, and comparing the numbers of French filmgoers in the mid-1950s (398 million in 1956) and in the 1970s

[15] 'What interested me foremost is the couple's love story […]' (*Le Quotidien de Paris*, 05/11/1976).

(181 million in 1975), the success of *Le Vieux fusil* was about equivalent to *Sissi 1*, until that point Schneider's most successful film at the French box office. The film divided French critics at the time but nonetheless won the César award for Best Film, Best Actor (Philippe Noiret), and Best Music (awarded posthumously to François de Roubaix) at the first César awards ceremony in April 1976. Schneider was not nominated for her part in *Le Vieux fusil* – perhaps unsurprisingly in view of her relatively small screen time – but she won the César for Best Actress for her role in *L'Important c'est d'aimer* (see next chapter), so she was very much part of *Le Vieux fusil*'s 'victory lap'. The film received a 'César des Césars' in 1985 (an 'ultimate' César award voted by the public, the only other film having received one is Jean-Paul Rappeneau's 1990 *Cyrano de Bergerac*).

Schneider plays Clara, a young woman married to Julien Dandieu (Noiret), a surgeon in the local hospital in Montauban (south-western France). As to Clara's national identity, the film remains elusive: she is neither German nor Austrian, nor even Alsatian (as Schneider's character in Henri-Georges Clouzot's unfinished *Inferno* for example), but it does not say that she is French either. As we shall see, the character's identity does not really matter: what is instead foregrounded is Schneider's glamour and a-temporal suffering. During the German retreat in June 1944, Dandieu fears for his family's safety (he '[doesn't] do politics' but treats members of the Resistance and is threatened by the Milice) and asks his friend François (Jean Bouise) to drive his wife and their daughter Florence to La Barberie, a remote village where he owns a château, for them to wait there until the Liberation. A week later, Dandieu sets off to join them for the weekend, but he discovers that the villagers have been shot in the church, and that his château is occupied by the SS. He sees Florence lying dead in the grass, shot, alongside another charred body. A flashback shows Clara being violently raped by Nazis in front of Florence and immolated with a flame-thrower. The rest of the film follows Dandieu's revenge: he sabotages the château's drawbridge and then, with his old shotgun (as in the film's title), kills every Nazi one by one, taking advantage of his knowledge of the secret passages in his château. While he progresses through the château and the village, the familiar place awakens Dandieu's memory, and he periodically remembers tender and everyday moments with his late family.

Le Vieux fusil was one of the first French 'rape revenge' films. It was released a few months after *Death Wish* by Michael Winner (1974), the US reference for the genre,

and *L'Agression* (1975) by Gérard Pirès, with Catherine Deneuve.[16] It was also loosely based on the massacre at Oradour-sur-Glane in June 1944, during which the first Battalion of the 4th SS Panzer Grenadier Regiment assassinated 642 civilians gathered in the village church and burned down the village. Set in the aftermath of D-Day, the film's fictional time coincides with the June 1944 date. At the beginning of the film, Nazi soldiers drive by two hanged men, referencing hangings in Tulle (99 deaths) on 9th June 1944, and Montauban (4 deaths) on 24th July 1944.

Le Vieux fusil's screenwriter was Pascal Jardin, who also wrote *Le Train*. Whereas the latter film alluded to the cowardice of some French people, Jardin here took the opposite route. Enrico too seemed inclined to celebrate the courage of modest and brave French heroes; he would later direct the first (*Les années lumière*) of the two-part film *La Révolution française*, a colossal international production celebrating the bicentenary of the French Revolution in 1989. *Le Vieux fusil,* however, divided French critics at the time of its release. *Cahiers du cinéma* (October and November 1975, pp. 1-96) dedicated an entire issue to it despite its journalist Jean-Pierre Oudart blaming Enrico for an 'abject discourse on the last war, Nazism and Vichy, [that] tries to give pleasure with a manhunt that lasts three quarters of an hour'. Overall, French critics deplored the film's Manichaeism (*Politique Hebdo*, 21/09/1975) – '[T]hese are the enemies from the outside, the eternal *Boches*, not the Militia that we saw at the beginning of the film and quickly forgot' (Oudart, 1975). Some denounced a form of emotional blackmail (*France Nouvelle*, 08/09/1975) by a 'revengeful' director, while other critics saw a beautiful love story thwarted by the course of History ('a tragic tone for a hymn to happiness', Rabine, 1975).

The film's originality is that it visually pairs these two extremes, being both classic in its narrative structure and mise-en-scène, and offering an experience of rare psychological violence. Regarding the film's violence, the role of Dandieu was originally offered to Lino Ventura who had worked three times with Enrico, but he refused due, allegedly, to the scenario's brutality (Dandieu executes the Nazis with impressive composure). On the surface, Ventura would have made a more credible tough hero, but Noiret's casting proved key to the film's success because of his 'debonair' aura and soft physique, which makes the bitter pill of the apolitical and non-violent French doctor's fall into barbarism somehow easier to swallow. Alongside Noiret, Schneider's character

[16] Robert Enrico had thought of Deneuve for the role of Clara (Moriamez, 2000).

represents lost happiness. The sequence in which Clara is raped and then murdered is memorable and shocking. It is set 31 minutes into the film and devoid of dialogue, with only François de Roubaix's menacing music and the horrific sound of the flame-thrower. It was rumoured in the press that Schneider's performance during the scenes was so credible that the actors who performed the Nazi soldiers felt extremely uncomfortable; Enrico also mentioned her heart-breaking cries and agonising screams, which he later decided to mute for dramatic purposes (Benichou and Pommier, 1981, p. 112). But beyond these sensationalist details, there is a fascinating aspect scarcely discussed – Clara's rape is *imagined* by Dandieu: what we see is what he assumes has happened. This situates Schneider's performance in the domain of prurient fantasy. In Enrico's film, there are at least two pasts: the violent past of the rape, and a pre-war past in which Schneider represents a prelapsarian ideal of beauty and happiness. It is precisely at the intersection of these two moments that Schneider's narrative construction as Clara is overtaken by Schneider's presence as star. A scene perfectly encapsulates this construction.

As Dandieu kills the SS one by one and remembers happy moments with his family, the film goes further back in time to the origins of his family and finally his first encounter with Clara. Julien and Clara meet in what I call the 'veil scene', which presents Schneider's face in close-ups as she performs a coquettish flirtatious routine. Set in a Parisian brasserie (shot in the well-known La Closerie des Lilas in Montparnasse), it shows Noiret's character mesmerised by Clara's appearance. She walks in through a revolving door, smiling and laughing at the sound of a classical piano tune. Julien notices her from afar. She wears a long black dress with long sleeves and a 'sweetheart' neckline, her hair is styled up into a bun surmounted by a small black hat adorned with pink flowers and a net veil that covers her features with discreet and dark flecks.[17] The image created here projects the 'ideal' femininity associated with Schneider's beauty in which the veil plays a significant role. Its main purpose, with its game of concealing and revealing, is to suggest a 'mysterious' and seductive femininity, but also to showcase the face of the star. Shortly after Schneider's entrance, the camera zooms in on to her face, which fills the whole screen when Clara is introduced to Julien by François. Her face is discreetly made

[17] The hat was a creation of French milliner and hat maker Jean Barthet, famous for his collaborations with stars (Sophia Loren, Catherine Deneuve, Maria Callas, Brigitte Bardot, and Jacqueline Kennedy). He also made Schneider's hats in *Une femme à sa fenêtre* and *La Banquière*.

up[18] and lit, filmed in soft focus to reinforce her glamourous quality. Clara is radiant and confident as she sits down, puts her arms on the table, getting closer to Julien. From now on the scene is filmed in a shot-reverse-shot with their faces in close-up. He looks dazed, longingly gazing at her. Champagne arrives, she sits up straight and gracefully follows the bottle's pouring movement with her head. She then lifts her veil and brings her glass to her lips with her right hand. She takes a sip while glancing at Julien on her right (her familiar 'œillade'). She swallows the champagne, replaces her veil, pinches her lips together, runs her tongue on her lower lip, then clicks her tongue and contently smiles (fig. 17).

Fig. 17. Schneider's courtship routine shot in close-up in *Le Vieux fusil* (1975).

If her costume evokes pre-war fashion in line with the character, Schneider's glamour is so carefully constructed by the mise-en-scène described above that the scene exists almost separate from the film, which indeed has propelled it to cult status (see conclusion). The close-ups of Schneider make the moment both central to the narrative and a-temporal – a moment where the star is celebrated beyond the character and becomes an object of spectacle (Mulvey, 1975) and of viewers' desire. This romantic scene occurs

[18] Schneider's makeup artist for most of her French career was Didier Lavergne, notably known for his work with Marion Cotillard for *La Môme* (Olivier Dahan, 2007).

at the end of the film, *after* the rape and death of Clara, strengthening its impact on audiences that already know her fate. Her youthfulness and her beauty are destroyed and yet continue to exist: Schneider's radiant, beautiful face highlights the Nazi horror while it justifies Dandieu's revenge and by extension French righteous outrage. Thus isolated and intensified, Schneider's face offers itself to contemplation and immersion, and *transcends* the narrative (Noa Steimatsky evokes the notion of transfiguration, 2017, p. 4; Roland Barthes speaks, about Greta Garbo's face, of 'mystical feelings of perdition', 1957, p. 65), situating the star as an a-historical icon of suffering.

Schneider's physical attractiveness, her charismatic performance, and the close-up were key to the *photogeny* of the veil scene. In her mid-thirties, her face was characterised by regular and smooth features (short, thin and straight nose, square jawline, green almond-shaped eyes, arched and thin eyebrows, a full and delicate mouth with a marked cupid's bow) not unlike Garbo's symmetrical and angular features, but with more warmth and roundness. The veil scene accentuates Schneider's own photogeny as a star: it invests her face with intensity and power (Aumont, 1992, p. 92; Driskell, 2015, pp. 65-67, 88), inscribing it into the spectators' memory, allowing them to become attuned to the story told by the incremental movements of her face (Aumont, p. 88). There is a gravity in Schneider's eyes, a melancholy charged with sensuality, empathy and compassion between the star and the spectators.

Other scenes and other close-ups show that French cinema was fascinated with Schneider's 'sculptural' face (in May 1980 *Paris Match* named her 'the most beautiful woman of the post-war period', Noli, 1981, pp. 68-71). In *Le Train*, the camera is absorbed in her visage's oval shape and weary expression, focalising Trintignant's gaze. In one significant scene he takes off his glasses to have a better look at Schneider, seated right next to him; the camera scrutinises every part of her profile in extreme close-ups, slowly moving downward to stop on her mouth (fig. 18). Many of Schneider's films, from all the different phases of her career, end on a freeze-frame of her face in close-up, crying or not, as was the case from her first role in *Wenn der weiße Flieder wieder blüht* in 1953 (fig. 19). This framing and editing technique underline the role of her face in enhancing the pathos of a given narrative, while sustaining the star's glamorous persona. *Une femme à sa fenêtre* ends on a freeze-shot of Schneider's face in close-up, reaching sexual climax. A similar mise-en-scène was chosen for the end of *Le Train*: Trintignant puts his hand on her cheek, then the camera stays on her as she slowly frowns in anguish, closes her eyes and stretches her mouth in a painful wince and then drops her face against his arm (fig.

20). The shot freezes on Schneider's agonised face, and slowly fades. Schneider does not utter a word in this final sequence. The emphasis on her silent performance heightens our perception of the nuances of melancholy and misery crossing her face. This configuration echoes formalist film theorist Béla Balázs's observation about the 'polyphony' of facial expressions ('a face can display the most varied emotions simultaneously') that is richer than the 'succession of words' (2010, p. 34). Barthes also evoked the exaltation and idealisation of a 'beauty who do not speak' (1957, p. 24).

Fig. 18. An extreme and prolonged close-up of Schneider's face in *Le Train* (1973).

Fig. 19. Many of Schneider's films end on a freeze-shot of her face. Up: *Wenn der weiße Flieder wieder blüht*, 1953 (left) and *Sissi 2*, 1956 (right). Down: *Boccaccio '70*, 1962 (left) and *Une femme à sa fenêtre*, 1976 (right).

Fig. 20. The final sequence of *Le Train* that features Schneider's anguished face. The image on the bottom right freezes and dissolves into the end credits.

Schneider's silent performance of pathos magnified in repeated close-ups of her face (some of them in freeze-frame), rather than on her body, on the one hand signalled a move away from the traditional eroticism of films like *Boccaccio '70* and *La Piscine*. On the other hand, it foregrounded an affecting image of generalised suffering – a visual clue to her a-historical persona in the 1970s, detached from the social changes taking place, as signalled in the previous chapter. Schneider's characters in these films were systematically depicted as women who suffered intense emotional pain, illustrating what Catherine Clément (1988), in her seminal study of Opera, calls the 'undoing' of women, where narratives almost systematically feature the literal or metaphorical death of female characters.

There is an array of reasons explaining Schneider's winning combination of suffering and beauty in Occupation films; some are generic, some are cultural, and some are personal. Firstly, there is the tremendous interest in the topic of the Occupation in general. Henry Rousso identifies 1974, the year Schneider made *Le Vieux fusil*, as the strongest moment in the *mode rétro*: 'Three years after *Le Chagrin [et la Pitié]*, France is "occupied" again' (1987, p. 149). Schneider's films' success was therefore not solely due to her presence – her co-leads' star status (Trintignant, Noiret, Piccoli) also ensured large audiences. However, Schneider was the only female star to feature prominently at the time in a genre that was overwhelmingly male. To name a few, *Le Chagrin et la Pitié*, *Lacombe Lucien*, and *Mr. Klein* focus entirely on men. Nor do other popular Occupation films made in 1970s France present central female characters; female roles tend to be underwritten and secondary, usually relegated to the love interest. Schneider's major female roles, albeit as victim, were thus unique in their importance and visibility, attesting to her privileged star status in France. Secondly, broad cultural reasons in relation to West German public discourse of nation-building shed light on Schneider's victim figures. For this, I turn towards her last film *La Passante du Sans-Souci* (1982), and a film that remains little known – *Gruppenbild mit Dame* (1977), both allowing me also to consider the personal reasons explaining Schneider's success in the Occupation genre.

2.3. Schneider's tense relationship with Germanic culture

Schneider's roles in *La Passante du Sans-Souci* and *Gruppenbild mit Dame* and her positioning in West German cultural memory of World War II both prolong and depart from her beautiful victim figure. The female repression and vulnerability that informed Schneider's Occupation roles has been illuminated by larger feminist discussions with

regards to German fascism, and more specifically about German women of the post-war generation (Schneider's generation) and how they relate to their father generation. Susan Linville notably, in her in-depth study *Feminism, film, fascism* (1998), shows that feminist and autobiographical German films of the 1970s and 1980s by Marianne Rosenbaum, Helma Sanders-Brahms, Jutta Brückner, and Margarethe von Trotta amongst others, are instilled with female victimhood and that a whole post-war generation of German women both claimed a status as victims and opposed the patriarchal and authoritarian nature of post-war German culture. Alice Schwarzer, a prominent but controversial figure in the West German women's movement, who met Schneider and published a biography of the star (1998), shares the view that there is an intimate relationship between post-war patriarchy and German fascism. She suggests that Schneider's roles in Occupation films bound the star's personal history to Germany's political past in very specific ways. She contends that the misogynist abuse of women in Schneider's films (such as the rape scene in *Le Vieux fusil*) merges with Nazi war crimes and the Holocaust. Schwarzer also draws a parallel between Schneider's alleged quest for roles that include such abuse and suffering, and her personal life. Thus, she sees the star as symbolically taking revenge on a generation of men represented by her stepfather Blatzheim (Schneider allegedly confided to Schwarzer that he tried to 'sleep with her several times', p. 80 and that she was sexually abused by a neighbour during a bombing nearby her childhood house when she was six years old).[19] In short, Schneider chose to perform Jews and/or suffering women during the war because she personally identified with them in their pain. However, it has to be pointed out that the abuses Schneider may have suffered in her private life were not known by her audiences and therefore could not have influenced the reception of her roles at the time of the films' distribution. Apart from Schwartzer's allegations, there is no substantial evidence of these abuses, nor of their connection to Schneider's choice of parts. However, in the section below I bring some nuance to Schwarzer's – at times far-fetched – argument by exploring how personal motivations and tragic events lent added poignancy to the perception of Schneider, especially amongst French audiences, as the embodiment of historical female suffering.

[19] Michael Jürgs had mentioned the alleged abuse of Schneider by her stepfather before in his 1991 biography of the star.

Since the early 1980s, the reception of Schneider's persona has been very much marked by the last year and a half of her life, a period that unfolded miserably from one traumatic event to another. The main event was the tragic death of her son David on 5th July 1981 at the age of 14. He fatally injured himself climbing his former step-grandparents' entrance gate at their house in Saint-Germain-en-Laye, near Paris (Schneider and Biasini separated in February and the divorce was pronounced in June). He slipped and fell on the gate's metal spikes, piercing his femoral artery. Although David died during surgery at the hospital, the shocking image of a boy impaled on a grid remains one of the most vivid memories associated with Schneider. She herself also went through health-related ordeals shortly before her son's fatal accident: in April, she broke her left foot during a stay in a spa at Quiberon (Brittany), and on 23rd May she had her right kidney removed following the detection of a tumour. This is the context against which to consider Schneider's performance in *La Passante du Sans-Souci*. Moreover, Schneider asked the director Jacques Rouffio to dedicate his film to Harry Meyen (who had committed suicide in 1979) and her son, insisting that the film's opening credits read, under her name, 'To David and his father'. Audiences knew that a close relationship united mother and son: she had paid Meyen a fortune to obtain her son's custody after the divorce and it was reported in the press that David accompanied Schneider on film sets and that she valued his appreciation and his help (notably with French pronunciation) despite his young age.

The film's release and distribution were therefore intertwined with Schneider's personal hardship. This tended to eclipse *La Passante du Sans-Souci*'s pre-production and narrative choices that are nonetheless of interest with regards to her political position in this phase of her career and amongst cultural memories of war. The project was initially developed by Schneider herself, who had read the eponymous novel by Joseph Kessel (1936) while filming *Une histoire simple* (Siclier, 1982; Schneider and Seydel, 1989, p. 302). She insisted on playing the lead and double role of Elsa Wiener (the adoptive mother of the protagonist as a child, in the 1930s) and Lina Baumstein (the wife of the protagonist as an adult, in the 1980s), and suggested Rouffio as director to the producers. With Jacques Kirsner, Rouffio developed a script that expanded the frame of Kessel's original story into the Paris of the 1980s. *La Passante du Sans-Souci* starts in the 'present', the early 1980s, with Max Baumstein (Michel Piccoli), the respected president of the humanitarian organisation Solidarité Internationale, shooting dead the ambassador of Paraguay in Paris. On the stand at his trial, Max reveals that the man was a former Nazi

officer, responsible for killing his adoptive family, the Wieners. He goes on to testify in front of the court about his life as a Jewish boy and how he had to flee Germany for Paris with his guardian Elsa Wiener, who saved his life when he was beaten up by SA brown shirts. Elsa's husband Michel (Helmut Griem), an anti-Nazi book publisher, was deported to a camp. She drowned her sorrow in alcohol and drugs, singing in a Parisian cabaret, prostituting herself to a Nazi officer in a desperate attempt to help liberate her husband. Michel was released but then he and Elsa were both assassinated in front of the café Sans-Souci in Pigalle by Elsa's Nazi lover during the war.

One scene in particular imprinted itself in the French collective memory in terms of Schneider's legacy as a glamorous icon of female suffering and resilience. Again, her face played a significant role. On Christmas Eve, Elsa and young Max have dinner in a fancy Parisian restaurant. She is dressed in a long, form-fitting, sequined, pale blue gown with a train and covered with a fluid colour-matching shawl in organza forming a large corolla collar attached with a precious glittering brooch – clothes that visually translate the combined notions of beauty, luxury and fragility associated with the star's persona. She is sad because they have not heard from Michel who stayed behind in Germany. Elsa asks Max to play the violin and, while he does, Schneider is filmed in medium close-up, her eyes filling progressively with tears. The emotion grows, she closes and opens her eyes and mouth several times, a tear rolls down her left cheek and she trembles as she smiles (fig. 21). The actor who plays Max (Wendelin Werner) was about the same age of Schneider's late son at the time, which led many to assume that Schneider was not performing but genuinely crying over David in front of the camera. On-set rumours spread, adding potency to this painful mingling between fictional on-screen narrative and private off-screen sphere (a particularly emotional version of a typical feature of stardom): the intense moment was allegedly captured in one take, crewmembers were crying on set, and after the scene Schneider ran off to her dressing-room which she had previously turned into a 'mausoleum' in memory of her son (she had pinned dozens of photographs of him on the walls) (Guillou, 2006; documentary *Un jour, un destin*, 2010). This clearly increased the overwhelming impact of Schneider's performance of the grieving mother. Her role in the film was made even more poignant by her own death a few weeks after its release. With time, audiences, media outlets, and fans alike made *La Passante du Sans-Souci* a film entirely dedicated to Schneider, the cinematic proof of, and testimonial to, her personal pain.

Fig. 21. The suffering mother in *La Passante du Sans-Souci* (1982).

While in Kessel's novel the Sans-Souci is the place where the narrator observes Elsa passing by the street, the café has a more substantial and political significance in the film, condemning more explicitly, with a plaque, the French involvement in war exactions and the repression of memories of the war. During her testimony in the 1980s trial, Charlotte (Dominique Labourier), Elsa's friend and fellow prostitute from Pigalle, explains that she affixed a commemorative plaque to Elsa and Michel on the café's wall when she herself returned from the camps and realised that their bodies had been disposed of by the 'Vichy people'. Charlotte continues by saying that the sign displeased some back in 1945: '[Elsa and Michel were] German resisters, it was the least we could do, they were the first ones to fight against Hitler'. But this is not the biggest alteration from the source material: in the novel, the Wieners are not assassinated, but Elsa kills herself after Michel ceases to love her. The tragic consequences of fascism are emphasised in the film through Max's flashbacks to his childhood in 1930s Paris, from the vantage point of the 1980s, especially since he is himself assassinated with his wife Lina six months after his trial. The last shot of the film shows the couple in the Sans-Souci with a text band informing the viewer about their imminent death. We are not told who murdered the Baumsteins, but the film, via Max's humanitarian activities ('against repression and for the defence of liberties'), draws a link between old and rampant, contemporary fascism. The film points to the neo-Nazis though, as two men verbally assault Lina at the end of the film when she learns that Max is condemned to a mere five-year suspended prison sentence: one spits in Lina's face, adding 'that's for your Jew, you whore!'.

Mentioning the murder of Max and Lina allows the film to suggest a critique of both German and French politics in the early 1980s – notably the rise of neo-fascist movements, which were loudly denounced at the time by Rouffio, Piccoli, and Schneider (she said: 'Nazism is still everywhere, every day', interview by Michel Drucker, 14/04/1982; Chevillard, 1982). However, the last sequence where Max and Lina meet at the Sans-Souci was altered when the film was broadcast on German TV (Bayerischer Rundfunk) on 15th December 1999. The text band announcing the murder was cut, as well as the shot of the bartender shaking Max's hand to congratulate him on his deed. The now reconfigured 'happy end' allows the resurrection of Elsa as Lina in a classic redemption fantasy. Through the double role, Schneider reconciled history and memory, past Elsa and contemporary Lina merging as the promise of a successful *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*.

Because of her sudden death in May 1982, Schneider was unable to synchronize her part for the German version of *La Passante* that came out in West German cinemas in October; actress Eva Manhardt stepped in. But whether Schneider would have actually done it is up to debate, especially given the West German censorship of *La Passante*. Schneider previously refused to dubbed herself for the German version of *Le Vieux fusil* in protest against the West German censorship of (amongst other minor cuts and edits) the infamous rape scene; Manhardt replaced her voice for this version as well. This example is one of many illustrating the conflictual relationship between Schneider and the German-speaking press, in particular in West Germany where her French Occupation roles were perceived as Francophile and therefore either ignored or frowned upon (Wild, 1975, p. 156). By contrast, *Gruppenbild mit Dame* in 1976, was her first and sole German-speaking role in a predominantly West German production about the rise of Nazism, the war, and the post-war years.

When Schneider went to Berlin for three months at the end of 1976 to film *Gruppenbild mit Dame*, it marked her return to West Germany, solely for work, for the first time in ten years (the last was for *La Voleuse* in 1966). The film is an adaptation of the eponymous novel (1971) by German author Heinrich Böll who carried a reputation as the 'conscience of the nation' and was a fervent moral critique of West German society since the foundation of the Federal Republic (Uecker, 2013, p. 98). It was directed by Aleksandar Petrović, a French-born and acclaimed Serbian/Yugoslav filmmaker who was one of the major figures of the Yugoslav Black Wave (Goulding, 2002; Kirn, Sekulić, and Testen, 2011). Through an array of characters (friends, family, colleagues) all

connected to the protagonist Leni Gruyten (Schneider), *Gruppenbild mit Dame* depicts everyday life in West Germany from the late 1930s to the late 1960s, showing ordinary people's perception of the Nazi era (though with a major omission, as the Holocaust is not evoked). Schneider performs Leni, an uncompromising woman who intends to live the way she wants – but this solely applies to the romantic life of the character, a generous, altruistic woman defined through her ability to love. We see Leni at four different ages: she first has an intellectual friendship with a Jewish woman disguised as a Catholic nun at her school; second, she falls in love with her cousin, a Nazi officer critical of fascist ideology and murdered with Leni's brother in their attempt to defect and flee to Sweden. Third, towards the end of the war, she is employed by a florist (Michel Galabru) to make wreaths in company of Boris (Brad Dourif), a Russian prisoner of war with whom she has a baby. Boris dies at the end of the war. Fourthly, in the 1960s, Leni, pregnant again, refuses to concede to the new consumerism of West Germany's capitalist society, and rather than give her apartment to her greedy relatives she prefers to shelter Turkish immigrants. The time structure of this dense narrative is fragmented, moving back and forth through the years in a way that many critics found confusing (*L'Humanité*, 25/05/1977; *Le Figaro*, 25/05/1977).

It is striking that Schneider who, as I shall develop, had had such a contentious approach to West German culture and identity, was cast as Leni, a character who is, according to Matthias Uecker (2013), Böll's ideal embodiment of the 'good German' from a West German perspective. I will not dwell on comparing Leni from the novel and Leni from the film for she is, in Böll's book, largely (physically) absent and only represented indirectly through the stories collected by the narrator to the point that she has been described as an immaterial 'Kunst-Figur' ('artificial figure'; Schnell and Schubert, 2005, pp. 434, 445). In both versions though, Leni is more of a 'utopian wish-fulfilment that represents everything Germans *ought to be*, inspiring admiration and partial imitation in some and violent rejection in others' (Uecker, p. 99, my emphasis, see also Bernhard, 1973, pp. 365-367) – she exists in contrast to the others, her main function within the novel is to inspire them and remind them of their own humanity (Uecker, p. 108). Through Leni, Schneider embodies both political criticism (denunciation of World War II and of the desolation in which the war left Germany) and social protest. Her character is shown to stand apart, usually in opposition to the mainstream of German society. Leni gives and loves while people around her take, destroy, or kill. Schneider's impassive face or tender, vulnerable expression are used to express small acts of

resistance (befriending a Jew, giving her coffee to Boris, loving a person of colour at a time when this was frowned upon). Leni's marginalisation echoes Schneider's own conflictual positioning within West German culture.

Schneider explained that she agreed to do the film because it finally showed 'a Germany that we've rarely seen before, from the defeated side, and not from the victorious side' (interview by Michel Drucker, 07/11/1976). Although she tended to avoid any press, French and West German alike, she gave a rare, extended interview with French TV personality Michel Drucker in Berlin during the shooting of *Gruppenbild* in which she stressed her attachment to France and probed her ambiguous relationship with Germany, and Berlin in particular, in ways that were both critical and appreciative. At one point in the interview, Schneider's voice breaks and she excuses herself for being emotional:

> I feel like doubly a stranger here […]. I am more foreign in this city that our French crewmembers. My homesickness is for Paris, for France. I play a German woman, but I have chosen France. I am married to a Frenchman, I am fully French, and perfectly happy with that. But […] Berlin and Berliners will always move me, because of their strength. It is not a city any longer, it is an island. Some Berliners pretend that there is no Wall, and Böll – and this is why I find him sympathetic – denounces how this country and this city failed to seize their chance after the total collapse [of World War II]. I want to say that Leni is a woman with whom I identify: she learned how to love amongst ruins, she is a true German, very strong, like the people [of Berlin], which is why she was able to survive the hell of 1945, the hell of the war. (*Les rendez-vous du dimanche*, 07/11/1976)

She would nonetheless, a few years later, contradict herself by going further in her criticism of West Germany's politics during the promotion of *La Passante du Sans-Souci* by saying, in reference to the Berlin Wall, that '[the city] is a shame for the entire world, a shame that *we* have carried for 30 years' (interview by Michel Drucker, 14/04/1982). The French-speaking media, not without chauvinism, saw her as a historical victim of the war (*L'Express* reported that the rise of Nazism 'forced her to leave Vienna for a small Austrian village where she spent part of her childhood', which was incorrect – see Part I, chapter 1) whose perspicacity in choosing later to stay in France situated her amongst the 'good Germans'. French director Bertrand Tavernier, with whom Schneider worked on *La Mort en direct* in 1980, even argues that Claude Sautet 'de-Germanised her' (documentary *Romy Schneider à fleur de peau*, 2013). The amalgam went so far that

Schneider was recently described – by a notoriously provocative broadcaster – as 'collaborating with the French' (Yann Moix, *On n'est pas couché*, 09/06/2018). Although in the late 1970s/early 1980s she situated herself on the French side of the Franco-German cultural dyad, Schneider was torn between her two identities. Arguably she was both French *and* German at the same time, but she herself could not contemplate that idea. At times, she claimed that she was French (see above); at others, she emphasised her Germanic origins by identifying with national stereotypes. Those included the 'Germanic spleen' that Luchino Visconti said she was prone to (see Part II, chapter 1), and, particularly of interest in the progress of this study, a strong Germanic femininity. Here, I use 'strong' in the sense that Schneider meant it when speaking of Leni, i.e. resilience and forbearance rather than power and strength (Schneider evoked the idea of self-reliance and resourcefulness: 'Leni is very German. She just "gets out of herself". In that sense, I would call myself very German', *Der Spiegel*, 22/11/1976, p. 219).

Schneider belonged to the generation of Germans whose parents were of the war generation and to question them and their lives meant to interrogate Germany's past. For many years, 'no one had dared to ask their parents what they did during the war, how they lived under Hitler, and to what extent they collaborated with the regime, unwittingly or not' (Kaes, 1989, p. 140). In the mid-1970s, the post-war generation looked back at their childhood and became introspective about the psychological trauma impacted by National Socialism on their country. As Angelika Bammer pointed out – without mentioning *Gruppenbild* nor *La Passante* though – many West German films of that period were the products 'of [late 1950s] West German cultural and political history […] marked by the struggle of a new generation of German artists – writers, painters, poets and filmmakers – to find words and images with which to understand and articulate their experience as Germans, an experience passed on to them by the generation of their parents whom denial and shame had, for the most part, rendered silent' (1985, p. 95). So, like many other German artists born with the anguish of the collectively given shame and pain, Schneider made an attempt to understand her parents' generation, facing the truth of the history of that period, rather than accusing them.

Gruppenbild mit Dame represented West Germany at the Cannes Film Festival in May 1977 but the press's response was lukewarm and the film fell short on European box office expectations (Helmut Karazek in *Der Spiegel* argued that it pales in comparison to Böll's novel and he blamed the film for being Petrović's 'vanity project' and the filmmaker for 'constantly communicating his own showmanship', 1977, p. 198). Despite

a Best Actress award at the German Film Awards in June (her pregnancy prevented her from attenting the ceremony), Schneider returned to France, where she gave birth to her daughter Sarah and took time off before starting *Une histoire simple*. It had been difficult to keep the German-speaking press at bay during her presence in Berlin, and the star was aggressively scrutinised and smeared by the tabloid press for weeks. Notwithstanding a small participation, a minute of screen time in the TV film *Tausend Lieder ohne Ton* by Claudia Holldack (the first and only time Schneider worked with a female director, which was the reason for her participation, Schneider and Seydel, 1989, p. 278) and two more co-productions, of which only *La Passante du Sans-Souci* was partially shot in Berlin, Schneider would not work in West Germany anymore.

This is a convenient place in the progress of my analysis to pivot and discuss Schneider's reception in the German-speaking media. More than her decision to live in France and to uphold her attachment to Frenchness, it was her reported views on Germany that antagonised her German-speaking audiences. Schneider had been suspicious of West German reporters since they had misconstrued her words in the early 1960s (see Part II, chapter 2) and she called herself 'a renegade in the eyes of Germany' (Schneider and Seydel, 1989, p. 243). Overall, her films were slightly less successful in West Germany than in France, but unsurprisingly, her Occupation films were even less popular. Many times, she complained of the critical reception she received in West Germany ('all I do is treason', p. 259) and of the West German film industry's 'lack of imagination' (p. 248).

There are several underlying reasons for this tension, some of which have to do with Schneider's relationship with Austrian theatre and German cinema in the 1970s. According to Austrian novelist and playwright Peter Handke, Schneider appreciated Thomas Bernhard's oeuvre (Schimmelbusch, 2014). Bernhard was critical of, even hostile towards the Austrian nation, and was often called a 'Nestbeschmutzer' (literally 'someone who fouls his/her own nest'), a derogatory term used to describe people who badmouth their own country. He was nonetheless an important theatrical figure: his most famous work was the play *Heldenplatz* (published in 1988, after Schneider's death). The title refers to the square where Austrians celebrated the arrival of Hitler after being annexed by Nazi Germany in the *Anschluss*, and the play problematizes the lingering anti-Semitism in Austria (Daviau, 1991). Many of Bernhard's plays met with criticism from many Austrians, who claimed they sullied Austria's reputation (Mitgang, 1989). Schneider was comfortable with Bernhard's criticism of the Austrian past and she attempted to work with him, or at least to have Harry Meyen direct one of his plays. But

the playwright always categorically refused. Like Heinrich Böll, whose first reaction to the casting of Schneider for *Gruppenbild* was to try and prevent it (Benichou and Pommier, 1981, p. 115), Bernhard could not go beyond the conflation of Schneider with Sissi (Schimmelbusch, 2014). New German Cinema filmmaker Rainer Werner Fassbinder made the same judgement and their projects together (an adaptation of Theodor Storm's novella *Immensee*, and then *Die Ehe der Maria Braun* in 1979, for which he cast Hannah Schygulla) never came to fruition. German producer Hanns Eckelkamp explained that 'She did not belong to his "clan"' (2007, p. 2).[20]

Schneider was therefore overlooked by the New German Cinema of the 1970s and by Germanic auteur theatre alike.[21] In part this may have had to do with her broadcasting (perhaps tactlessly) the idea that her Germanic heritage was somewhat inferior to French culture. But we need also to place her in the context of actors arising from the popular cinema of the 1950s who were shunned by auteur cinema. Schneider similarly 'missed' the French New Wave in the 1960s for reasons I developed in Part II, chapter 2. Her former screen partner in the 1950s Horst Buchholz experienced a similar situation. After a career in popular German film of the 1950s and in Hollywood, he only made only two West German films in the 1970s, both by popular German film directors (Alfred Weidenmann and Rolf Thiele). So, when Schneider said that she was not accepted in West Germany (or Austria), she did not mean German-speaking audiences but rather the West German film industry, and the auteur film and theatre communities that failed to recognise her as the 'perfect *comédienne*' as she was then saluted in France (Billard, 1977, p. 5). Generally speaking and though there were exceptions ('Our best ambassador', *Jede Woche*, 11/10/1979), the Germanic medias were more interested in the failures lining up her personal life ('How Romy loves and suffers', *Bunte*, 01/07/1976) than in her professional accomplishments. As we will see in the general conclusion on Schneider's legacy, the French press and fan literature were not that different in this regard, with a tendency to concentrate on her as a celebrity rather than a professional actress.

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[20] Fassbinder's specialist Thomas Elsaesser claims, without referencing his source though, that the director's rejection had to do with 'Schneider's [excessive] demands, her indeciveness and heavy dependence on alcohol' (2001, p. 154).

[21] Andrea Bandhauer (2015) suggests instead that the dismissal of Schneider from 'serious' German directors was about her family background to which she was still 'connected' – i.e. the mark 'left by her parents' absolute refusal to acknowledge their involvement in the Nazi regime' (p. 219). I distance myself from that argument that tends to suppress Schneider's own self-agency in the shaping of her career.

Conclusion

Schneider's roles and performances in Occupation films situated her at the centre of complex relations to the memory of World War II between West Germany and France. These films, their success in France, and lack thereof in West Germany, constructed a persona polarised between two national receptions, oscillating between the two poles of her double identity, a liminal position that she occupied since the massive success of the *Sissi* cycle. On the French side, her choice of roles represented an active and redemptive voice for Germany's violent past, and implicitly a vindication of her choice to work in France. On the West German side, her reception was unsurprisingly more ambivalent – as she was frequently perceived as a 'traitor' – and she was not only criticised by the media but also shunned by avant-garde Austrian theatre and New German Cinema. This further complicated her conflictual relationship with Germanic cultures as she struggled to occupy, in the West German film *Gruppenbild mit Dame,* the ethical victim that she embodied in her French roles.

Schneider's vulnerability, an aspect of her persona already familiar to French audiences, and more specifically her characters' suffering, melancholy, and ultimately tragedy, set her films apart from others within the Occupation genre in French cinema. They also stood out in their unique featuring of a major female star, within a genre dominated by male characters and actors. In terms of mise-en-scène, I examined how prolonged close-ups of the actress's face foregrounded both an affect-laden image of female suffering and the alluring, glamorous vision of the star. The chapter also revealed that, to her projection of traditional feminine vulnerability, Schneider added a darker side made of violence and tragedy, echoing off-screen events in her private life that were widely circulated in the media. This brings me to the next and last chapter of this study in which I am concerned with Schneider's performances in an 'excessive', melodramatic mode in a set of increasingly morbid films.

Chapter III. Pathos and hysteria

Introduction

This final chapter considers films made towards the end of Romy Schneider's career and that display new types of roles for the star – more sombre and more within the sphere of hysteria (defined as spectacular emotional manifestations, histrionics).[1] On the one hand, I explore the relation between those roles and Schneider's roles in Occupation films, and on the other hand I consider how Schneider's evolution towards sombre and victimised roles relate to the status of women in French society in the second half of the 1970s and the early 1980s. I am also interested in the way these films draw on Schneider's acting skills in a more overt way, leading the media to construct a dichotomy between the accomplished actress and the unhappy woman.

I look at those films through a thematic lens rather than following a strict chronology, dividing them in three groups. The overall trajectory of this chapter is a tragic one, Schneider's vulnerable persona curving towards the pathetic, and I begin with the 'retro aesthetics' films as they use similar aesthetics to the *mode rétro* films previously examined but are not thematically concerned with the German Occupation. Then I move on to *L'Important c'est d'aimer* / *The Most Important Thing: Love* (Andrzej Żuławski, 1975) as the film represents a turning point in associating the actress with excess and focussing on Schneider's performance. I conclude this study with Schneider's series of particularly sombre films with roles connoted with morbidity.

1. Retro aesthetics films

Ludwig (Luchino Visconti, 1973), *Le Trio infernal* / *The infernal trio*, and *La Banquière* / *The Lady Banker*, both directed by Francis Girod in 1974 and 1980 respectively, belong to a broader 'retro aesthetics' trend in West-European cinema, with which Schneider was familiar as they share a similar visual style, notably with *Le Vieux fusil* and *Une femme à sa fenêtre*.

[1] I am aware that the term 'hysteria' is, in common usage, loaded with anti-feminist sentiment (see *Hysteria beyond Freud* by Sander L. Gilman et al. (1993), and 'Hysteria, feminism, and gender revisited: the case of the second wave' by Cecily Devereux (2014) in *ESC: English Studies in Canada*, 40:1, pp. 19-45).

Regarding the two Girod films I was very fortunate to meet and interview journalist and filmmaker Anne Andreu, Girod's widow, at the Cinémathèque française on 2nd December 2016. She gave me rare insight into her husband's work with Schneider.

With the exception of *Ludwig* that was shot outside France, this aesthetic continuity had a lot to do with the French team that created Schneider's costumes (Jacques Fonteray), hats (Jean Barthet), hair styling (Jean-Max Guérin), and makeup (Didier Lavergne), as they had in her Occupation films. However, the narratives now cover different topics: *Ludwig* recounts the reign of King Ludwig II of Bavaria in the second half of the 19th century, and the Girod films are set in 1920s-1930s France. I will not dwell for long on the Visconti film because Schneider's role as Elisabeth of Austria is a minor one. Although the European marketing of the film drew on the fact that she reprised the iconic regal role for the fourth time (she only agreed because of her friendship with Visconti whom she trusted to create an 'historical authentic portrayal of Sissi', Schneider and Seydel, 1989, p. 245), and she was given a co-starring credit, the star of the film is German actor Helmut Berger in the title role.

Ludwig was a project that Visconti had long contemplated and no expenses were spared to produce what he considered his masterpiece – that is before the film, deemed too long and some scenes too suggestive regarding the King's homosexuality, had been drastically shortened by distributors twice without his consent (Visconti suffered from a stroke during filming and was not healthy enough to prevent a first one-hour cut, and then a second 55-minutes cut after the premiere in Munich in January 1973).[2] Although the film was a critical and commercial success (especially in France and Italy)[3], due to the major editing, it is difficult to evaluate its impact on Schneider's career at the time. Several versions of the film have been at different times available, and as I have not been able to view them all, I cannot assess what scenes include Schneider in these versions, which is why I proceed with care in my analysis. What is certain though, is that Schneider wears several imperial costumes designed by Visconti's regular collaborator Piero Tosi, and that the imagery of the film's promotion mostly centred on her presence in these costumes, featured in many European outlets and magazine covers (*The Sunday Times*

[2] *Ludwig* was restored to its four-hour original running time by *Ludwig*-scriptwriter and Visconti's long-time collaborator Suso Cecchi d'Amico and *Ludwig*-film editor Ruggero Mastroianni in 1980.

[3] 1,390,846 persons went to see the film in France (Simsi, 2012, p. 208), and it is estimated that around 3,165,000 spectators saw it in Italy.

Magazine, 10/09/1972, fig. 22). The delicate, pastel-coloured dresses and hour-glass silhouettes that she wore in the mid-1950s in Marischka's trilogy were replaced by lavish, heavy[4], and highly-detailed designs (brocade, lace, ruffles, beads, jewels, feathers). These more historically accurate costumes are declined in a mostly dark palette of black, burgundy, blue and grey, and include a range of hats, black veils of various laceworks and lengths, many furs, and a lace umbrella. The Austrian Empress's much celebrated locks of hair are also on full display. Schneider wears the iconic tresses styled in heavy and complicated crowns down her neck or loosened, the gigantic wig forming a cape from her head down to her ankle (fig. 23). The development of Schneider's acting style since her Sissi years is noticeable: she has lowered her voice (as suggested by Claude Sautet a couple of years before in order to attenuate her German accent, a habit that she applied to the other languages she fluently spoke, German and English), her tone is more assured, controlled, which makes her acting appear more cerebral and sophisticated, less impulsive and 'natural'. There are nonetheless traces of the sensual Sissi from the third instalment of the series in Visconti's film. The equestrian top hat that she wears in her first appearance in the film is reminiscent of Schneider's costume in *Sissi 3*. Schneider embodies the Empress/horse-riding woman with pride and the sense of entitlement that she showed in 'Il lavoro' – chin up, straight back, determined speech, air of superiority. If Schneider's smile and laugh were perceived as natural and 'authentic' in the 1950s, the expression of an ingénue, which is incarnated in this version by Sophie-Charlotte (her younger sister performed by Sonia Petrovna), she now opts for a derisive smile. Schneider's flared-up nostrils are unerring indicators of this sarcastic expression. She sometimes laughs, throwing her head back, but in a spirit of mockery, not of gaiety. In this way, Visconti (and Schneider who rallied up to his idea) wished to 'set the record straight' and offer a glimpse of the 'real' Elisabeth (Schneider and Seydel, 1989, p. 245; Bonini, 2001, pp. 153-156). In her few scenes, Schneider's portrayal of the Empress is that of a cynical, disillusioned, and melancholy woman, speaking sharply, gazing away, or frowning, deep in her thoughts. She feels misunderstood by the court and her entourage (in that sense, Ludwig and Elisabeth share a bond, which briefly brings them together in an incestuous moment), closer in personality to the historical figure described by contemporaries and historians than the gentle young woman imagined by Marischka.

[4] Schneider's scenes take place in winter and were shot on location (Bavaria and Austria) in January and February 1972.

To consider *Ludwig*, *Le Trio infernal* and *La Banquière* solely through the lens of the French debates about the *mode rétro* evoked in the previous chapter would be restrictive, as these debates tend to highlight the conservative ideology of the films and are, for that period, mainly the German Occupation films. The discussions around heritage cinema in an Anglo-American context however, allow me to expand my perspective on those three films by arguing that Schneider's roles and performances in them took full advantage of retro aesthetics in order to convey potentially progressive gender and sexual politics (or appear to do so, as we shall see for *Le Trio infernal*). This is the argument advanced by scholars such as Richard Dyer (1995), Claire Monk (1995a, 1995b, 2002) and Belèn Vidal (2012b) from a feminist and pro-LGBTQ[5] stance. They purport that, beyond the costume genre previously criticised for presenting the past (the English past, in that context) in a nostalgic and lavish fashion which detracts from historical or critical understanding (Higson, 1993, 2003), the period films instead offer a more progressive stand and enable the films to talk about issues that contemporary-set films could not address, notably by depicting the personal struggles, social position, and the rights of women and LGBTQ individuals.

Ludwig, *Le Trio infernal* and *La Banquière* belong to the heritage genre in terms of their setting in the past, their adaptation of literary texts, their high-quality visual production values and their depictions of high-class (even royal) lifestyles with luxurious settings and clothing, but also, to some degree, for their progressive stance on sexual politics. *Ludwig* was penalised by heavy cuts for its queerness for a few years. In that regard, moving on to a comparison between *Le Trio infernal* and *La Banquière* is a fruitful task as the latter, I argue, suggests a more enlightened position, one that is in addition mirrored by the greater star power that Schneider had gained by the beginning of the 1980s. I will start with *Le Trio infernal* in order to contrast the agency gained by Schneider with her starring role in *La Banquière*.

[5] I am aware that it is anachronistic to label 'LGBTQ' what was 'Gay and Lesbian' in the mid-1990s.

Fig. 22. Schneider in one of her Elisabeth of Austria's costumes from *Ludwig* (1973) on the cover of *The Sunday Time Magazine* (10/09/1972).

Fig. 23. Schneider's troubled version of Sissi in *Ludwig*.

The dark comedy *Le Trio infernal* was adapted from the eponymous novel (1972) by French author Solange Fasquelle who was inspired by real and sordid events that made

headlines in the 1930s in the Marseille region when lawyer and assassin Georges-Alexandre Sarret was put on trial, condemned for double murder, and guillotined. In the film version, set in 1920s Marseille, Schneider performs Philomène Schmidt, a German émigré who forms a dubious alliance with Georges Sarret (Michel Piccoli, who was also executive producer and a significant influence on Schneider accepting to co-star). They become lovers and Georges elaborates a plan to rip off ailing men of their life insurances: Philomène marries the men (on the first occasion becoming a French citizen) and makes them contract a life insurance that she and Sarret cash in once they die. Philomène's sister Catherine (Polish actress Mascha Gonska) arrives in France and becomes Sarret's mistress and their new partner in crime. The 'infernal trio' murder their accomplice who passed as the husbands in the medical examinations conducted by the insurance companies, as well as his mistress, and dissolve their corpses in bathtubs filled with acid. They then plot to contract life insurance for Catherine and pretend she dies, and to substitute the body of Magali (Monica Fiorentini), a young woman suffering from tuberculosis. But the plan backfires when Magali recovers and Catherine dies by falling from the window – it is not clear if she committed suicide or if Magali pushed her. Upon her sister's death, Philomène forces Georges to marry her, which he does, looking utterly unhappy.

Le Trio infernal came out in France in May 1974, a year that witnessed important cultural and sexual shifts within the film milieu: censorship had considerably loosened since the events of May 68 and was practically abolished in 1974; the soft porn film *Emmanuelle* (Just Jaeckin) with Sylvia Kristel came out in cinemas in June that same year, and porn cinema generally was booming. The depiction of bold sexuality (polyamorous relations, including incestuous ones) in the film therefore conforms to wider trends in the French film industry, and might even appear 'transgressive'. However, the film's sexual politics are situated in a sensationalist and mercantile register. Indeed, the sex relations in *Le Trio infernal* may be located outside of Western society's hetero-patriarchal norms, but they do not veil the film's misogyny and homophobia. The women (including the sisters) in *Le Trio infernal* are rivals and replaceable with one another as suggested by the ending (Magali will take Catherine's place in the scheme), all for Sarret's personal satisfaction and sexual gratification. Though every character is malevolent, especially Piccoli's dubious solicitor and evil mastermind, women are the ones depicted as having 'perverse morals' (i.e. lesbian relations) within the terms of the time. Homosexuality as represented in *Le Trio infernal* is far from being subversive (or

simply normal): as Sarret forces Catherine to play the role of Magali's nurse, he suggests that she goes further by exhausting the young woman sexually, pushing her to have sex with the convalescent. Catherine expresses her opposition but grudgingly obeys him. Sarret and Philomène later spy on the two women having sex through the bedroom's keyhole, reinforcing the exploitative and sensationalist aspect of the lesbian pairing.

In spite of its sensationalism, with just over 600,000 spectators *Le Trio infernal* was not a success at the French box office (Simsi, 2012, p. 270). Although it is difficult to point out the exact reasons for this lack of popularity, we may be guided by the fact that many critics expressed their annoyance at the film's polished retro look (Siclier, 1974), and their disgust at the gratuitous 'provocation' (*Le Quotidien de Paris*, 21/05/1974) of the long and detailed sequences showing the acid baths in which bodies are dissolved (*Les Echos*, 31/05/1974; *La Croix*, 01/06/1974; *Le Canard enchaîné*, 05/06/1974). Schneider's performance drew mixed reviews, a few journalists found her 'amazing' (Douin, 1974) and 'dazzling' (*Les Echos*, 31/05/1974); Philomène was 'one of her best roles so far' (*France-Soir*, 22/05/1974), while other brushed over her presence in the film, simply mentioning her impressive collection of hats (Pantel, 1974), in other words dismissing her character and performance by pointing to the shallowness of the *mode rétro*. Those later critics had a point, and I will now examine in what way Schneider's persona fits the visual aesthetic of the film but rings false with the characterisation and tone of her role.

As part of the *rétro* trend, the film deploys a luxurious 1920s iconography, notably through costumes – *Le Trio infernal* was the most expensive first film within French cinema at the time (*L'Aurore*, 21/05/1974). I have analysed before how historical costumes fitted Schneider well; in that regard, *Le Trio infernal* was no exception. The film explicitly foregrounds fashion. Schneider, as leading female star, throughout strikes an alluring silhouette, especially once the trio's scam starts paying off and she becomes rich. More than her chic dresses (loose and knee-length designs, with straight-lines and a dropped waist), sheer evening gowns (low-cut and form-fitting lines, embellished with feathers), and fur coats and capes, her cloche hats of various colours and fabrics, adorned with rhinestones, feathers and veils, take centre stage (fig. 24). The hats showcase her prominently made-up face. Schneider had a facial structure well-suited to vintage looks and the soft lines of the hats enhanced the glamorous spectacularisation of her face: the lines of her cheekbones and jawline were accentuated with blushes and shadows, the contours of her lips outlined in crimson red, her eyes were accentuated with dark eyeliner.

Arguably, Schneider's image being associated with period fashion, her silhouette in historical costumes acted as a nostalgic reminder to the viewer, and thus a reinforcement of her stardom. And yet Schneider's persona did not fit the dark comedic tone of the film and of her character. Piccoli, on the other hand, was famous for his roles as perverse and shady bourgeois, thus the character of Sarret was a 'perfect fit' for him, in Richard Dyer's terms (1998, p. 129) – reminiscent of his earlier cynical and sarcastic types, notably in *Belle de jour* (Buñuel, 1967). Schneider on the contrary struggled to provide the ironic distance[6] necessary to perform the chilling but comic character of Philomène; the latter was too different from either her chic bourgeois persona (as in the Sautet films) or her vulnerable roles in the Occupation films. Philomène was Schneider's last comedic role in a filmography that do not include many.

And yet, despite being a 'problematic fit' (Dyer, p. 129), Philomène exhibits some affinities with Schneider's tragic image because of her deadly nature; she does not pull the trigger herself, but she gets rid of the bodies and manipulates the dying Magali. It is in that sense that the role began to situate the star within morbidity, an aspect that would become important to her roles in the late 1970s and the early 1980s. I will now move on to Francis Girod's second film with Schneider, *La Banquière*, and explore how, this time, her role as the treacherous but powerful Emma Eckhert represented a 'perfect fit' with Schneider's persona.

[6] Unlike, for instance, Mireille Marc whose persona developed an amalgam of blond glamour and comic farce such as in *Elle boit pas, elle fume pas, elle drague pas, mais… elle cause* (Michel Audiard, 1970), or Jeanne Moreau in *Le Journal d'une femme de chambre* (Luis Buñuel, 1964), whose erotic persona included an important sardonic dimension.

Fig. 24. Schneider's makeup and hat accentuating the spectacle of her face in *Le Trio infernal* (1974).

Made six years after *Le Trio infernal*, *La Banquière* (1980) focuses on the complex character of Emma Eckhert, inspired by Parisian businesswoman Marthe Hanau (1886-1935), a controversial figure implicated in a major financial and political scandal in 1928 – in the film as in real life, her profits are based on insider trading and on her construction of what we know now as a Ponzi scheme. Giving her the role of a woman in a position of economic and political power and independence, the film is unique in Schneider's filmography – it also stands out in French cinema history as one of the very few featuring a woman banker in the leading role or simply a woman progressing in the world of high finance (another rare exception is Pascal Bonitzer's *Tout de suite maintenant*, with Agathe Bonitzer in 2016). *La Banquière* is a biopic that oscillates between fiction and the reality of a historical figure who famously defrauded many small investors. Very well-known in the 1930s, Hanau was less so at the end of the 1970s when the film was made (which may have enabled the filmmakers to take liberties with Hanau's biography).

The role was offered to Schneider by Girod a couple of years after *Le Trio infernal*. He created the Hanau-inspired character for her (Gabrysiak, 2015, p. 235). Despite the critical and commercial failure of his second film *René la Canne* in 1977,

Schneider reiterated her support to Girod and *La Banquière* was funded and produced because of her presence in the cast (interview with Anne Andreu, 2016). The film was an expensive production (16 million francs, according to Catherine Hermary-Vieille, 1988, p. 207), and it benefitted from an important promotional campaign (Douin, 1980b, cover and pp. 70-73; *Elle*, 25/08/1980, cover and pp. 14-15; *Première*, 08/1980, cover and pp. 14-19; *Libération*, 02/09/1980). Many French critics reproved the 'American-like' scale of the film and Girod's submission to the *mode rétro* with the film's lavish visual style (sets, costumes, furniture, vintage cars, *Libération*, 02/09/1980). With nearly 2,5 million spectators in France, the film was a success and the 14th most successful film the year of its release (Simsi, 2012, p. 45).

Emma Eckhert crystallises Schneider's 1970s French persona: she is beautiful and imperial, she appears modern and sophisticated, she is feminine and seductive, and yet she ultimately meets a tragic end and is depicted as a victim.[7] I will now proceed to analyse how the character and the film were adapted to Schneider's on- and off-screen persona. The scenario, written by Girod and novelist Georges Conchon, was mostly developed from a biography of Hanau by Dominique Desanti, entitled *La Banquière des années folles* (1968). Desanti's perspective on Hanau's life and career is positive; she praises her trail-blazing approach to savings and investments. This is understandable in terms of her political views: Desanti was a feminist, a former member of the Resistance and of the French Communist Party. Girod and Conchon adopted a similar standpoint and the film therefore differs from historical facts in several ways, including, importantly with regard to Schneider's image, a conclusion that is more favourable to the protagonist, rendering her almost heroic.

At first, the narrative seems analogous to Hanau's life: Emma has Alsatian origins, her French is slightly German-accented, she is Jewish, she has a tense relationship with her mother, she is a lesbian but agrees to marry out of convenience with Moïse (Jacques Fabri) who becomes her friend and first business partner. These details are presented in

[7] In 1979, Schneider played a similar character in her second film with Terence Young, *Bloodline*. The film stars Audrey Hepburn amongst an international cast (James Mason, Ben Gazzara, Omar Sharif, Maurice Ronet) but failed at the box office, was lambasted by critics, and rapidly fell into oblivion, leaving no mark on Schneider's persona. Schneider's few scenes show her character Hélène as a powerful, ambitious and greedy woman. Alongside her husband (Ronet), she manages the French branch of her family's pharmaceutical company. She wins a racing car, showing no remorse at a fellow contestant who died in the race. She is however ultimately the deceived party in her husband's financial scheme.

the first minutes of the film, with the help of intertitles, and shot in black and white. The main narrative is in colour and begins in 1929, a time characterised by a buoyant stock-market (though the October crash is not mentioned, nor does it appear to have any effect). Back then, women were barred from the Paris Stock Exchange, yet Emma is a prosperous banker. She is the founder and president of a lucrative savings bank bearing her name, and the owner of two financial newspapers. Emma's professional and private lives are interlaced, she flirts and teases and falls in love while developing her business organisation. Yet, her immense triumph causes her defeat, plotted by her opponent Vannister (Jean-Louis Trintignant), who represents the conservative establishment and would rather not see a Jew ('a foreigner', he says), let alone a woman, defy him. He helps the authorities putting Emma behind bars, close down her company, and ruin her and her clients. Then, he plans her assassination at a public meeting, held soon after she escapes from prison and during a rallying speech to her friends and supporters.

The biopic distances itself from historical reality early on in the narrative and in several respects which, for the most part, have to do with sexuality and gender relations. Emma lives in a virtually all-male world. Like Hanau in the 1920s who was carrying out executive roles largely reserved to men. Judging by photographs of her and descriptions by Desanti, the real-life Hanau had a quasi-manly physique. Emma, in this respect, was adapted to Schneider: beyond her professional achievements, the film foregrounds the character's femininity, her sophisticated clothes, and her delicate makeup. Schneider's beauty, the foundation of her star identity, was explicitly used to 'elevate' the original character to the rank of 'myth' (Douin, 1980b, p. 71). Hanau was known for being tough and cynical, and Schneider sometimes delivers her lines in a rapid and aggressive manner, or in a slow, condescending vocal tone. Her drawl is linked to her German accent and often goes with a disdainful expression of the mouth (fig. 25). But those scenes are rare and Schneider frequently appears more seductive and gentle than what would normally be expected of characters (male or female) in the same position of decision-making and power. And while Hanau disguised herself as a bearded man to get in the Palais Brongniard (where the stock exchange was located at the time) (Desanti, 1968, pp. 13-18), Schneider instead sends her male employees to the stock exchange and is never seen wearing men's clothes except once, in an attire reminiscent of Marlene Dietrich's tuxedo and white tie in Josef von Sternberg's 1930 film *Morocco,* with her hair short and slicked (fig. 26).

Hanau was known for being a lesbian: she had affairs with women, including a long and scandalous (for the time) relationship with a woman named Josèphe. In the film, Josèphe is renamed Camille (Noëlle Châtelet), she is described as a rich heiress and the very first person with whom Emma falls 'really in love'. Marthe and Josèphe had a relationship until Marthe's death, but in the film Emma soon establishes a distance and falls out of love with Camille after the first ten minutes. She proceeds to an affair with the promising male politician and brilliant orator Rémy Lecoudray (Daniel Mesguich). After their first night together, he says that he thought that she 'only liked women'; she responds that she 'thought so too'. Emma's lesbian sexual orientation is therefore shown to be a phase, and somewhat used in an exploitative manner (the original poster shows her wearing an androgynous outfit) to instil a semblance of modernity to the film: Emma's homosexuality is quickly erased from the narrative to leave room for a more normative heterosexual relationship. There are remaining traces of Emma's queerness in the form of a lasting bound with Camille and a meaningful friendship with Colette Lecoudray (Marie-France Pisier), the wife of Emma's lover who, shameful at the prospect of his own downfall, kills himself.

Although I was not able to find documents that confirm or refute that those narrative choices in *La Banquière* were deliberately made to fit Schneider's persona, another significant change from historical facts brings further support to this argument – the manner of Emma's death. While Hanau committed suicide in her prison cell in 1935, Emma dies publicly in a spectacular ending, so theatrically staged and excessively performed that it verges towards Grand Guignol. Emma is shot by one of Vannister's acolytes while she gives a passionate speech: in slow motion, Schneider throws her head back and opens her mouth widely, raising her arms, before awkwardly collapsing onto the floor (fig. 27). This scene is the pinnacle of a narrative that has led the viewers to side with the protagonist and see the cruel Trintignant and his clique as misogynistic, anti-Semitic, and jealous villains who plot the defeat of a 'visionary' and modern woman – even as we are aware of Emma's misdemeanours and frauds. In comparison, male characters in similar films about the world of high finance either lose their job (*L'Argent des autres*, Christian de Chalonge, 1978), end up ruined (*Le Sucre*, Jacques Rouffio, 1978), start their career all over again, or go to prison (*Mille milliards de dollars*, Henri Verneuil, 1981) – except for Stavisky in Alain Resnais's 1974 eponymous film, who dies a suspicious death. Thus, the fate of Schneider's characters at the end of the 1970s and beginning of the 1980s is invariably tragic. Showing a proud, ambitious, intelligent, and

successful woman banker as the prey of the patriarchal establishment and toning down the fact that Hanau was a crook, serves to emphasise the victim status of the character, in line with the vulnerability at the core of Schneider's star image. The following section explores the heightened suffering and melodramatic structure of Schneider's character and performance in Andrzej Żuławski's *L'Important c'est d'aimer*.

Fig. 25. Schneider's disdainful pout in *La Banquière* (1980).

Fig. 26. Schneider's androgynous look in *La Banquière*.

Fig. 27. Schneider's theatrical death in *La Banquière*.

2. Valorising hysteria: Schneider's melodramatic performance in *L'Important c'est d'aimer*

When Schneider filmed *L'Important c'est d'aimer* in the second half of 1974, it was her fourth film of that year after *Un amour de pluie*, *Le Mouton enragé*, and *Le Trio infernal*. She was approaching the peak of her French career (the success of *Le Vieux fusil* and *Une femme à sa fenêtre* would shortly follow) and was the most sought-after actress at the time in the French film industry (Couderc, 1974; interview by France Roche, 12/02/1975). She was paid 1 million francs for her role in *Le Trio infernal* and obtained 200,000 more for her staff, i.e. babysitter, secretary, chauffeur, and personal assistant, according to *Le Nouvel observateur* (10/06/1974). Her fame enabled her to choose her projects, the directors with whom she wanted to work, and she was able to influence some aspects of the production of her films (character development, casting, and very occasionally cinematography and editing[8], Benichou and Pommier, 1981, p. 103). Polish filmmaker Andrzej Żuławski was one of the filmmakers Schneider wished to work with. He had previously written and directed the critically acclaimed *Trzecia część nocy* (1971) and *Diabeł* (1972); upon its theatrical release the latter was banned by the Communist government in Poland until 1988. Following this experience with censorship, Żuławski came to work in Paris. He had been there before, at the end of the 1950s when he was exposed to the New Wave[9] and studied at the IDHEC[10] film school. He also worked as a script-doctor for Philippe de Broca and Louis Malle amongst others.

L'Important c'est d'aimer is the adaptation of Christopher Frank's novel *La Nuit américaine* (1972).[11] Frank was already associated to Schneider's career as he wrote the script for *Le Mouton enragé*, a film produced by Léo L. Fuchs[12] who suggested Frank's

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[8] As stipulated in her contract, Schneider demanded that most of the close-ups of Gisela Hahn, her co-star in *César et Rosalie* in the role of Rosalie's sister Carla, were cut (Steinbauer, 1999, pp. 108-110).

[9] As a film about an actress at work, *L'Important c'est d'aimer* shows parallels to *Le Mépris* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1963), notably in the dynamic relationship between the three leads set against the film industry world, Georges Delerue's melodramatic music, and the misogyny shown towards the female protagonist (Loshitzky,1995, pp. 138-141; Vincendeau, 2013, pp. 102-106).

[10] Institut des hautes études cinématographiques (now called La Fémis).

[11] The novel's original title *La Nuit américaine* was left aside early in pre-production in order not to be confused with François Truffaut's 1973 film of the same name. The title *L'Important c'est d'aimer* was chosen by producer Albina Du Boisrouvray against Żuławski's (and Schneider's) wish (interview with Żuławski by Christian Defaye, November 1981).

[12] Not to be confused with Leo Fuchs (1911-1994), the Polish-born American actor.

novel to Żuławski to adapt for his first 'French' film. With Schneider, the German Klaus Kinski, the Italian Fabio Testi, the Polish director and crew, and funds from Paris, Rome and Munich, *L'Important c'est d'aimer* is a transnational film made in France (Goddard, 2014, p. 250). Frank and Żuławski co-wrote a scenario from *La Nuit américaine* and Albina Du Boisrouvray, who owned the rights to the novel and had a contract with Schneider, stepped in as producer (Fuchs is credited as associate producer). Sources differ as to whether Schneider herself suggested the name of Żuławski to Fuchs or Boisrouvray or simply agreed to work with him after she saw *Trzecia część nocy* (telling her agent Jean-Louis Livi that she would like to collaborate with the auteur) – in any case Schneider's stardom was a determining factor in the film existence and Żuławski credits her for making the project possible (Grassin, 2012). However, we should be wary of attributing too much agency to the star, as media discourse on Schneider frequently leans towards hagiography and tends to give her more decision-making power that she had. A chorus often came up at the time (and since), suggesting that Schneider 'took risks' in putting her fame at the service of filmmakers seen as 'underdogs', such as Żuławski, Girod, Costa-Gavras, and Claude Miller, and that agreeing to star in their films was a 'leap of faith' for her career and her image (Benichou and Pommier, 1981, p. 130-104). The reality is more nuanced: Żuławski already had international critical recognition for his first film before working with Schneider, Costa-Gravas had made the hugely successful *Z* (1969) and *L'Aveu* (1970) before collaborating with Schneider. As for Girod, even though *Le Trio infernal* was indeed his first film, he was steeped deep into the French film industry as an assistant director, screenwriter and producer (it was Piccoli, as executive producer, who took a financial risk). It is true that Miller represented more of a hazard for Schneider's career: his last film *Dites-lui que je l'aime* (1977), made four years before *Garde à vue*, failed at the box office but Schneider loved it and she wished to work with the 'promising' director (Benichou and Pommier, p. 139). The presentation of Schneider as a champion of auteur cinema and a risk-taker tells us instead that the star was eager to diversify her career by accepting challenging roles that would also bring her artistic legitimacy. The reference to Sissi still remained persistent in the mid-1970s and in the 1980s (even if it was to emphasise that she was 'becoming the film actress of the century', *Minute*, 31/01/1980; and in her last two interviews in *Stern* and *Paris Match* the topic of Sissi takes up a third of the articles, 23/04/1981 and 08/05/1981 respectively); and can still explain her choice of certain roles, such as in *Le Trio infernal* for which Girod said to her that 'it would the suicide of Sissi' (*Télérama*, 14/10/1987). However,

the diversification of films and characters, if it indeed left behind the 'innocence' of Sissi, did little to steer her persona away from vulnerable femininity; on the contrary, each role in the films under discussion in this chapter reinforced the tragic aspect of Schneider's image further into pathos (as well as misogyny), starting with a bang in *L'Important c'est d'aimer*.

Żuławski's work is mostly known for its excess: the narratives are confusing at times (absence of conventional explanation), but consistently about characters torturing themselves and each other, with displays of hostility, horror, and violent clashes of emotions underlined by music. Most films centre around a female character performed by a young, beautiful star (after Schneider, Isabelle Adjani, Valérie Kaprisky, Sophie Marceau) who greatly suffers and displays neurosis and hysteria – the first retrospective of Żuławski's films in 2012 in the US was entitled 'Hysterical excess'. *L'Important c'est d'aimer*, Żuławski's first film in France, is narratively and visually dark (with murky and unflattering colours and lighting). It inaugurates the dour and tortured emotional landscapes that Żuławski would further explore in his French career.

Żuławski changed Frank's original material to concur with his cinematic vision of decay: instead of the novel's artistic and intellectual milieu, he set his film in the seedy pornographic film business in contemporary Paris. Beginning with the encounter between photographer Servais (Testi) and Nadine (Schneider), an 'aging' actress who is reduced to appear in lurid, soft-core B-movies, *L'Important c'est d'aimer* charts their destructive and toxic relationship by showing her descent in a brutal and extreme way. Servais becomes obsessed with Nadine, resulting in a love triangle between them and Nadine's husband Jacques (pop singer Jacques Dutronc in his first dramatic film role). In an effort to revive Nadine's sagging career and get in her good graces, Servais borrows money from a dubious underworld boss, Mazelli (Claude Dauphin), to fund a theatre production of Shakespeare's *Richard III* staged by an eccentric German director (Klaus Kinski). Meanwhile he continues his regular job which consists of taking pornographic photographs. When Nadine realises that Servais was behind the play she offers to sleep with him in order to 'pay off her debt'. Although he rejects her, Jacques commits suicide out of jealousy. Jacques's death separates Servais and Nadine who feels responsible, while Servais refuses to comply with the degrading demands of Mazelli who beats him. In a final scene that echoes the beginning of the film (which I analyse below) and brings some cyclical unity to the narrative, she finds him badly hurt and she expresses her love for him.

Żuławski's move to France coincided with a shift from male romantic protagonists to female performers who became central to his themes and visual style (Goddard, 2014, p. 248). Cinematographer Ricardo Aronovich uses slow zooms that end in tight close-ups of Schneider's face whose tortured expressions suggest a fractured mind and unbalanced emotional state. Although it features several brutal altercations between characters, *L'Important c'est d'aimer* concentrates on Nadine's violent emotional pain, expressed through her intense performance. Schneider's character and acting are situated within the melodrama register, and I will now consider her performance in further detail.

In a first example, I examine an internalised, toned-down aspect of Schneider's acting, and in a second example, a feverish, externalised and physical expression. Both instances relate to the complex phenomenology of the melodrama genre – that is the emphasis on 'the inner emotional states of the characters' (DeCordova, 1991, p. 121), which require, argues Christine Gledhill, an 'excess of expression' such as 'hyperbolic emotions, extravagant gesture, high-flown sentiments, declamatory speech […]' (1991, p. 212). One of *L'Important c'est d'aimer*'s first scenes illustrates this concept of melodramatic performance, as well as functioning as narrative element (a performance-within-the-performance). Performance inflections typical of melodrama to convey emotions such as hysteria, madness or suffering, as in this scene, are used to display acting skills by providing moments 'exhibiting high degrees of expressive incoherence' as James Naremore puts it (1988, p. 76). As Servais sneaks onto a film set to take illicit photos of her, Nadine struggles to act in an intimate and emotional scene – saying 'I love you' to her lover lying in a pool of blood. She is directed aggressively by a female director (Nadia Vasil). Naremore adds that 'in such moments, the actor demonstrates *virtuosity* by sending out dual signs, and the vivid contrast between facial expressions gives the "acted image" an emotional richness, a strong sense of dramatic irony' (p. 76, my emphasis). This intense scene shows Schneider-the-star and her character as an emotional performer, expressing an affective inner life. When she becomes aware of Servais's camera and presence, she softly pleads with him to stop, extending her arm towards him, her hand covered with fake blood – straddling a bloodstained body, in a silk nightie and heavy, smudgy makeup with fake long eyelashes and streams of tears on her cheeks. She justifies her poorly-convincing performance by saying that she is 'an actress [*comédienne*], you know, I can do good stuff and that, that here, it was just for nothing' (fig. 28). We are meant to understand that Schneider's 'bad' acting in the soft-porn film and the signs of her character's struggle to act out are marks of her 'good' performance

in Żuławski's film (her delivery is hesitant, she stumbles on 'I love you', she says it without emotion nor meaning, sighs out of despair, shakes her head and tearfully responds to the tyrannical director that she 'can't do it'). At the end of the film, Schneider mouths 'I love you' to Testi: she is in tears again, but her character is overwhelmed with 'real' emotion – Nadine means it this time, and the scene shows that Schneider can act both emotional sides of the same phrase, she can show that her character cannot feel powerful sentiment and she can show that the woman finally is in love.

The opening scene, which initiates the contact between the two protagonists, also shows Żuławski appealing to cinematic elitism by emphasising the gap between his arty film style and the 'idea of porn' used to illustrate the 'exploitative dynamics of Western media culture' (Goddard, 2014, pp. 250-251). The importance of pathos to the scene is reinforced by Georges Delerue's music that begins the moment Schneider sees Servais (their faces filmed in alternating close-ups), developing a romantic theme that is used each time Schneider's character experiences pain. This sequence conflates the screen exploitation of female emotions with devotion as it instils in Servais the desire to photograph her 'properly', to find a suitable artistic role worthy of her, and to become her lover. In other words, his desire is rooted in the pathos and abasement of Schneider's character that he somewhat manipulates from 'behind the scene'. We could also point to Żuławski's posture of hypocrisy here: through Servais, the director appears to denounce the vulgarity and the exploitative nature of the pornographic industry, and yet his own mise-en-scène uses the same exploitative tropes. As in this scene, his female performers are often naked or scantily dressed. There also follows a gratuitous scene (i.e. that does not advance the narrative) in which Schneider begins to touch her genitals over her silk nightgown, suggesting masturbation.

The misery of Nadine culminates in Schneider performing an extravagant meltdown in a café when she and Jacques break up (he kills himself shortly after, ingesting pills in the bathroom). In this scene as in many others, Schneider lays herself bare emotionally, making her performance the focal point of narrative *and* style. She begins by making her character ostensibly fight against an outbreak of emotions: she cries softly and tries to conceal her tears by grabbing her head with her hands, progressively building the intensity of the exchange from minimal facial movements, overall body-control and poise, to violent head movements and shaking, screams, and smashing her hands onto the table (fig. 29). The violence and the physicality of Schneider's performance give the impression of a woman on the edge now losing control over herself;

and yet her movements are so well orchestrated, albeit in an exaggerated way, that her acting reaches old-fashioned melodramatic eloquence as defined by Gledhill above, an acting style that creates a tension between naturalness and strangeness. This is also noticeable in the dialogue: although Schneider's German accent was considerably attenuated over the decade, she kept a distinct elocution and diction, particularly noticeable when she raises her voice. Her verbal flow never gets rushed in angry scenes so that each sound comes out clearly (still with a light insistence on the [k] sound and on vowels). Such scenes, during which Schneider displays histrionics, call attention to her technique and make the audience more than ordinarily mindful that they are watching a performance (Naremore, 1988, p. 139). Her acting style creates a theatrical effect, which increases her *value* as a performer, but paradoxically connotes authenticity (she is blurting out emotions she cannot contain).

With Nadine's melodramatic descent, Żuławski added a new leaf to the book of feminine stereotypes embodied by the star – an unbalanced woman, dominated by her emotions, who has no control nor power, and is afraid of aging. Nadine is only 30 years old (Schneider turned 36 during filming) but she is made to appear 'too mature' and terrified of aging: the industry rejects her and she feels 'tired and lost', as she says. She lacks self-confidence, as displayed on Schneider's face. It is telling that Schneider's most critically valued performance so far, in a film that was commercially successful, was that a damaged, neurotic, and fragile woman – another 'defeated' figure, in Catherine Clément's terms. In April 1976, Schneider received the first César award ever for Best actress for her performance as Nadine. This acknowledgement by her peers is not surprising when one contemplates the track-record of such trophies in Western film cultures: awards tend to go to roles in which acting is apparent, even ostentatious, hence the received idea in the film industry that actors are rewarded for excessive and violent performances (historical roles in period dramas also offer a great exposure for actors' performances, Vidal, 2014, p. 2; Moine, 2017, p. 10). The other explanation has to do with the character of Nadine. Contrasting with the momentum of the women's movement and the fight for equality between the sexes in mid-1970s France and western Europe, images of feminine hysteria that had connotations of morbidity represented a striking backlash against notions of female independence and strength. Considering those contexts for her César, it is also revealing that the strongest competition for Schneider that year was Isabelle Adjani, nominated for *L'Histoire d'Adèle H.* (François Truffaut, 1975), also a melodrama of excess – Adjani's character ends up mad in an asylum after a

life of passion and drama. Such bias is confirmed by the fact that Adjani received her first César for Best actress in 1982, for another Żuławski film, *Possession* (1981), in a particularly misogynistic role which also demanded of her a hysterical performance.

The vulnerability of Schneider's character in *L'Important c'est d'aimer* was also constitutive of her on- and off-screen star persona, in different ways: at a professional level, with her approach to acting; and at a more intimate level with her personal behaviour. Schneider became known for her intense working method in approaching and impersonating characters. She liked 'immersing herself' in a part, building background stories for the women she performed, finding details that would trigger emotions. From the mid-1970s onwards, she was held in high regard by French-speaking journalists and her colleagues for her perfectionism. They praised Schneider's dedication to her roles – a recurrent cliché was that she 'gave herself' completely to them (*Première*, 08/1980, pp. 18-19) and that she summoned her feelings from deep inside, giving the impression that she was revealing something about herself through her acting (the term 'intensity' also recurred in reviews). This applied particularly to her dramatic, physically and emotionally demanding performances, such as that of Clara in *Le Vieux fusil* (with the rape scene), Nadine in *L'Important c'est d'aimer*, and Katherine in *La Mort en direct* (discussed later).

Although it is difficult to judge a private behaviour in the absence of precise documentation, the filming of *L'Important c'est d'aimer* brought out, by all accounts, a pattern of personal behaviour that became known about Schneider and that can be connected to her working method. Schneider's technique was to research the role through long discussions and rehearsals with the screenwriter(s) and the director with whom she demanded to have an exclusive relationship (asking him to reassure her, comfort her on set, exchanging notes about the role). She often expressed in interviews her 'need' to be guided and told exactly what to do. In some cases, it appears this need for reassurance took the form of amorous relations with directors (as with Claude Sautet, although this persistent rumour has never been conclusively verified). Rumours of liaisons with co-stars (Horst Buchholz, Serge Reggiani, Jean-Louis Trintignant, Sami Frey) are persistently circulated and an affair during the shooting of *L'Important c'est d'aimer* was recently confirmed in an interview with Jacques Dutronc in *Vanity Fair* (Denisot, and Douin, 2015). Because Schneider's 'need to fall in love' as singer Françoise Hardy (Dutronc's partner) calls it in her memoirs (2008), was known and discussed by journalists, it became part of her star 'myth', reinforcing her persona as that of a woman who is needy and vulnerable, seeming to echo the nature of her characters. In some cases,

commentators did not hesitate to qualify this feature with misogynistic remarks (‘Romy Schneider, a girl not so sure of herself who desperately needs love’, *Paris Match*, 05/09/1980).

After the turning point of *L’Important c’est d’aimer* in terms of Schneider’s melodramatic, ‘hysterical’ role and performance, I move on to her roles in even more sombre films in order to determine in what ways and to what extent they contributed to her overall ‘tragic’ persona.

Fig. 28. Schneider’s pathetic plea in *L’Important c’est d’aimer* (1975).

Fig. 29. Schneider’s hysterical physicality in *L’Important c’est d’aimer*.

3. The last sombre films

The last three years of Schneider’s life and career were marked by morose, even depressive, films. In *Clair de femme* / *Womanlight* (Costa-Gavras, 1979), *La Mort en direct* / *Death Watch* (Bertrand Tavernier, 1980), and *Garde à vue* / *Under Suspicion* (Claude Miller, 1981), she performs characters in direct association with sadness, despair, and death.

Clair de femme is the adaptation of the eponymous novel by French writer Romain Gary (1977). Director Costa-Gavras explains in his memoirs (2018) that he was often asked at the time when he would make a romantic film (p. 283), as he had so far mainly written and directed political action films, with great success. When he came across *Clair*

de femme, he immediately thought of Yves Montand (a long-time collaborator: they made four films together) and Romy Schneider (whom he 'admired') for the lead roles – before writing a script. Producer Georges-Alain Vuille, who owned the rights, wanted to cast Capucine instead of Schneider for the role of Lydia Tovalski, but he was convinced by Costa-Gavras's choice. If the filmmaker remains elusive in his book about the exact reasons behind his casting (he evokes 'the good atmosphere of a film shoot with [Montand]' and that Schneider 'would be perfect', p. 283), he was uncompromising. Two reasons might explain his choice. First, Schneider's romantic, vulnerable and tragic image fitted the description of her character, Lydia. Secondly, although Costa-Gavras does not mention this, a Schneider-Montand reunion, seven years after the success of *César et Rosalie*, was an undeniable commercial argument. The pairing of two of the biggest stars of French cinema indeed paid off as *Clair de femme* was a success with nearly two million tickets sold in France, making it the 17th most successful film to come out in the country that year (Simsi, 2012, p. 44).

Costa-Gavras's script is a close adaptation of the original material with most of the dialogues taken from Gary's prose. At the last minute, Michel (Montand) refuses to embark on a plane to Caracas and takes a taxi from the airport to Paris where, opening the car's door, he bumps into Lydia and spills her groceries in the gutter. He insists on repaying her and they exchange contact information. He meets her at her apartment in the first of several encounters over the course of two days and two nights, while he goes back and forth between the airport and Paris, changing his mind about leaving. Both characters look unhappy – for reasons as yet undisclosed – and console each other. Their background unfolds as they learn about one another and become lovers. Lydia's husband had a car accident in which their daughter died and he suffered a severe brain injury. Michel's wife Yannick was incurably ill and they had agreed that she would commit suicide the day before, after Michel's leaving for Caracas. Yannick is now dead and Michel confesses to Lydia that, before he left for the airport, she had said that she would take on the form of the next woman he would meet. At the end of the film, Lydia phones Michel and explains that she cannot deal with him in his present emotional state, but invites him to live in her apartment while she goes away, leaving open a possibility of a relationship when she returns.

As Lydia, Schneider impersonates death: she replaces a dead woman in the life of a widower.[13] This key narrative trope is mentioned early in the novel while it is not revealed until much later in the film, creating dramatic suspense. Schneider performs a woman who is visibly depressed, exhausted, suicidal. She wears unflattering clothes (loose lines, muddy and dull colours) and barely any makeup, and her hair hangs down flatly on her shoulders, which emphasises her overall air of fatigue and gloom (fig. 30). There are similarities to her earlier roles in Claude Sautet's films: Lydia's appearance resembles that of her character in *Une histoire simple*, pushed to an even duller register, and the Lydia-Michel couple could be a drearier version of Rosalie and César. The psychological suffering, however, unfolds in a world of privilege: as in the Sautet films, the characters in *Clair de femme* are from backgrounds where money is irrelevant (Lydia's husband comes from a wealthy aristocratic Russian family, Michel is clearly well off – he is a former airline pilot in the book).

Although Schneider's presence is central to *Clair de femme*, Lydia is merely used as an emotional support to Michel. Her suffering adds layers to the character, but in many ways she is mirroring Michel's pain, whose wandering lead the narrative. Her subordinate role, slowly revealed throughout the film, is made clear early in the book: Lydia is the 'femininity' without which it would be 'impossible [for Michel] to live', says Yannick (Gary, 1977, p. 28). Lydia is viewed as a lifeline. However, at the end, she realises that Michel's love is misguided (he is too unhappy, too desperate) and she insists on delaying their reunion. This last-minute epiphany acts as a burst of self-determination for Schneider, but barely cancels out the 100 minutes' duration of the film during which she looks utterly miserable and is exploited to make Montand's character feel better.

Schneider never explained why she accepted the role of Lydia, given her reticence about working with Montand a second time – she had expressed her irritation at the star's attention-grabbing personality and acting style during the shooting of *César et Rosalie* (Bonini, 2001, pp. 165-166). But the two actors were friends nonetheless and Schneider, true to her reputation, obtained Costa-Gavras's undivided attention during filming and held equal ground with Montand (Costa-Gavras, 2018, pp. 286-287). Given Costa-Gavras' track record and status, *Clair de femme* had the potential to bring success,

[13] In a similar way, she incarnates death in the Italian film *Fantasma d'amore* (Dino Risi, 1981) as Anna, a revengeful ghost visiting her past lover performed by Marcello Mastroianni.

prestige and artistic legitimacy to her and it did – she was nominated for her third César in five years, but lost to Miou-Miou for her role in *La Dérobade* (Daniel Duval, 1979).

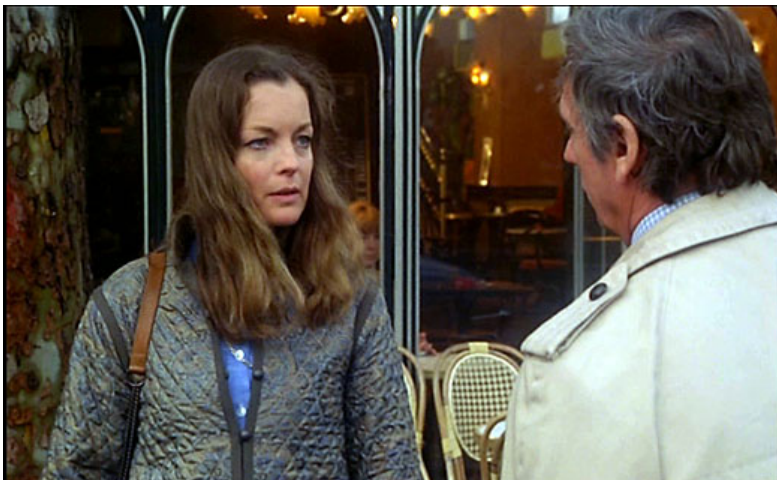

Fig. 30. Romy Schneider and Yves Montand meet in *Clair de femme* (1979).

A similar situation occurred the following year with the international science fiction film *La Mort en direct* directed by Bertrand Tavernier in which Schneider performs the role of Katherine Mortenhoe, diagnosed with an incurable disease. Set in Glasgow in a near future where death from illness has become rare, Katherine is approached by a television company offering a large sum to film her last days for a reality show. She agrees but then runs away at the prospect of being followed everywhere. She is helped by Roddy (Harvey Keitel) but Katherine does not know that he was 'planted' by the television company. He has cameras implanted in his eyes and his mission is to follow Katherine and film her. When he catches the show playing in a pub, Roddy takes pity on his subject, yet a short-circuit in his eyes causes his blindness. He reveals who he is and they continue on their way to her ex-husband Gerald (Max Von Sydow) in rural Scotland, where she wishes to spend her last days, but are chased by a television crew now that Roddy's blindness had stopped the feed. We learn that the doctor and the television company were conspiring: Katherine is not ill and the pills that she is taking to relieve her symptoms are in fact causing her pain for better televised entertainment. The producer explains that she is not dying and must stop medicating. Instead, and because 'this is the only way [she] can win' (against the evil producer), she decides to kill herself and ingests the rest of her pills.

Contrary to *Clair de femme* in which Schneider's character was used by a man in pain until the very end but where there is a glimpse of a hopeful, 'normal' future, *La Mort*

en direct presents Schneider seemingly taking matters into her hands for the entirety of the film, only to see her being manipulated and tragically die at the end. Katherine's suicide is treated as a last heroic moment of pride. She dies right before the arrival of the television crew: this is presented as her having the last word, exacting a revenge against the televised exploitation of her death. The fact remains that she is dead. The film does not end there but continues to show Roddy (still blind) and his wife reconciled. Schneider's tragic death is therefore again exploited for the benefit of a male character: Roddy has changed thanks to Katherine and he is gratified with a happy ending, while she is gone. The tragedy of Schneider's characters always serves a double purpose – valorising the leading man at the level of the character, but showcasing her tragic performance at the level of the star.

Continuing the trend we observed, Schneider was highly praised for her performance in *La Mort en direct*. The result was a persistent conflation between the pathos of her role in the film, the 'virtuosity' of her acting style and her overall star persona. Katherine's death is not seen by critics as a tragedy but as a 'triumphant ending' that mirrored Schneider's acting process (de Gasperi, 1980). Tavernier mentioned several times Schneider's 'lyricism', calling her a 'tragedian' who 'gave herself whole-heartedly [to her role]' (de Gasperi, 1980; Bauby and Rémond, 1980, p. 38). When Tavernier was trying to secure funds for his film, American producers wanted Jane Fonda or Diane Keaton for the role of Katherine (and a bigger star such Robert de Niro in lieu of Keitel), but Tavernier vehemently refused, citing the lack of depth, purity and sincerity in the American actresses' performances (de Gasperi). Very noticeable in this last period of her career is the evolution in the language used to describe Schneider's performance: she went from *comédienne* (actress) in the 1960s, an appellation that signified that she had already climbed an important step in the European cinema hierarchy since *Sissi*, to *tragédienne* (tragedian), the latter clearly reinforcing Schneider's association with classical theatre and pathos. When Schneider radiantly smiles and gazes up deeply at her ex-husband while she tells him about her forthcoming suicide, she is described in the press as a woman 'bearing life within herself' (*Télérama*, 30/01/1980, p. 88), as an actress who is 'more and more beautiful as she disintegrates' (Bouteiller, 1980). The choice of words reveals misogynistic views of women being aligned with death and self-oblivion rather than agency and strength. *L'Humanité*, for example, argues that Katherine rebels against 'the violation of her personality and her intimacy' and that she 'fights with *the only* means she has', flight, then death, a '*healthy and successful* fight' (my emphasis,

23/01/1980). In the voyeuristic world denounced by Tavernier, Schneider is adulated for embodying a woman who holds the high moral ground, yet this is achieved through the sacrifice of her own life. I previously referred to Catherine Clément's demonstration of the 'rule' in Opera, according to which women must be tragic and preferably die to be valued in our culture (1988). Tavernier, though he might have been unaware of this reference, equated Schneider to 'an Opera actress' (de Gasperi) and more precisely – although never naming the character – to Violetta, the tragic heroine of Giuseppe Verdi's *La Traviata* (1853) by which he was 'inspired in writing and filming' *La Mort en direct* (Douin, 1980a).

The synthesis epitomised by *La Mort en direct*, but evident in *Clair de femme* too, between Schneider's tragically suffering and dying characters, and the 'luminosity' and 'radiance' that the press assigned to her looks and performance, constitutes her legacy. Although the reifying discourse about the tragic Schneider solely stems in significant part from her own death at a young age (43) and that of her son, and other unhappy events unravelling at a fast pace towards the end of her life (Meyen's suicide, a major surgery, divorce from Biasini), my analysis of her films from the mid-1970s onwards shows that assigning Schneider a tragic image was an ongoing process that started long before her death, via on-screen roles that started to merge with her off-screen persona. This amalgam was also due to her working method that projected the image of an intense woman-on-the-edge, on the verge of breaking. As *Paris Match* put it, 'Cinema's good little girl […] does not know where cinema ends and where her life begins' (*Paris Match*, 08/05/1981).

In this respect, *Garde à vue* is situated at the extreme end of the tragedy continuum for Schneider, although the film had little impact over her image because, as a chamber piece confrontation between two major French male stars, Lino Ventura and Michel Serrault, it leaves little room for Schneider's role.[14] Her presence is nonetheless essential to the film's gender dynamics for she is mainly present to enhance the character of Serrault, Jérôme Martinaud, called in in a Cherbourg police station during New Year's Eve. He is first named as a witness, then suspected and held in custody by Inspector Antoine Gallien (Ventura) for the rape and the murder of two girls, one of whom he knew personally. Gallien is doubting the guilt of his suspect though, and lacks concrete

[14] *Garde à vue* was a critical and commercial success (with 2,100,865 spectators it was the 17th most successful film in France in 1981, Simsi, 2012, p. 46). It was awarded four Césars out of eight nominations in 1982.

evidence. The arrival of Chantal (Schneider), Martinaud's wife, instils trouble in Gallien's mind. According to her, Jérôme has an inappropriate penchant for young girls; she asserts that she could provide the Inspector with a clue that would link her husband to the murders. Martinaud then breaks down and confesses to the murders. But the real murderer is caught, and Martinaud leaves the station to find his lifeless wife in their car: she shot herself in the head after witnessing the discovery that clears her husband (a body is found in the murderer's car). The producers had doubts about casting Schneider for they feared that adding her to the Ventura-Serrault duo would be 'too much' in terms of star quota. Despite the slight implausibility of her accent (Chantal is a very French name), her presence in the film is used by the director precisely for her star persona, which is the raison d'être of Chantal's intervention (Dumont, 1981).

Schneider's role draws on misogynistic clichés in its opaqueness. She is a deceitful woman who apparently attempts to make her husband fall by wrongly accusing him, and tries to make him pay for their unhappiness. Yet, although Martinaud is not guilty of the rapes and murders of which he is accused, her testimony suggests he is morally guilty of amorous feelings for their young niece. The narrative presents Schneider as a jealous, sad, 'frigid' and castrating, woman. According to Gallien her refusal to execute her 'marital duties' means she is 'failing' her husband. *Garde à vue* is a particularly sexist film: the sympathy and the solidarity developing between the two male characters (enhanced by their charismatic performances) is ironically reinforced by Schneider's intervention, as she renders the character of Serrault more likable. She performs Chantal with cold arrogance, elegant and solemn in her long, tailored black dress. This image, like Schneider's performance, were inspired by the femme fatale from post-war Hollywood cinema as impersonated by Jean Simmons and Gene Tierney to cite Miller's examples (Dumont, 1981; Durante, 1981, p. 79). Schneider says her lines throughout her scene in a flat tone: she never raises her voice and the intonation is mostly kept at a whispering, calm level. This mode of delivery emphasises the mysteriously dangerous aspect of her character. Embodying such a baleful character, Schneider is used to justify Serrault's cynicism – it is *her* fault if he developed inappropriate desires for a girl. Martinaud asks Gallien if he would have called his niece as a witness but the policeman pretends not to understand the insinuation. This is male solidarity upholding patriarchy in is most toxic form: by refusing to address (or at least verify) Martinaud's predatory behaviour, Gallien further casts doubt on Chantal's testimony and enables him, potentially, to continue his possibly abusive behaviour.

Mental instability, emotional excess and morbidity were key components of Schneider's persona in these last films. Though those aspects remain under the same banner of 'vulnerability', they differ from Schneider's tragic *fate* in Occupation films, where it is demonstrated that her downfall was at the hands of History, in this case Nazism and/or French collaboration. This nuance further reinforces the notion of a backlash against women in such films as *Clair de femme*, *La Mort en direct* and *Garde à vue*, and the filmmakers' retrograde concept of femininity. The films indicate that their female protagonists' personalities and aspirations are themselves problematic – bringing their own misfortune upon themselves.

Conclusion

In the introduction to Part III, I briefly compared Catherine Deneuve's and Annie Girardot's career paths in the 1970s to Schneider's in order to bring out the specificity of her star image. The present conclusion is a good point to reflect on and further contrast the images projected by these three stars at the turn of the 1980s and against the backdrop of a cultural backlash against feminism and progressive representations of femininities that started at the beginning of the decade (Frischer, 1997; Bard, 1999; Badinter, 2003).

As the three most popular female stars of the 1970s, Girardot, Deneuve and Schneider exhibit different levels of engagement with contemporary roles that reflect changes in women's lives. During the 'long 1970s', Girardot's films – beyond their consensual aspect – offered the rare on-screen representation of joyful and positive womanhood with a degree of sexual satisfaction, gender equality and professional authority. She fitted the cinematic naturalism of the period (the same aesthetic seen in Sautet's films), making her an emblem of the modern, yet 'ordinary' woman. Because of this accessible, 'ordinary' dimension, her star image normalised the transformations within patriarchal status quo, negotiating a transition between traditional and emancipated womanhood. Meanwhile, as said in the introduction, Deneuve's sophisticated and conservative persona was at odds with the naturalism and more political trend seen in French cinema at the time, which explained her films' relative lack of success at that time. In the 1970s, her career went into two directions: she turned towards European auteur co-productions on the one hand, and French comedy on the other. As we saw, the quasi-absence of comedies in itself is an aspect that singles out Schneider from her two colleagues at the height of her French career. I have extensively talked about Schneider's on- and off-screen chic, bourgeois persona and, in this respect, she and Deneuve shared

the same template. Deneuve's imagery of refined glamour was 'colder' though (the 'icy' blonde, Le Gras, 2010b) and more distanced than Schneider who projected a warmer and touching vulnerability. Moreover, Deneuve (unlike Schneider) benefitted from an off-screen image as an autonomous, committed and 'pioneer' woman; she represented a 'timeless' elegance *à la française* (notably in her collaboration with Yves Saint Laurent) while simultaneously advocating feminism (she signed the 343 Manifesto in April 1971 and claimed to be a feminist in September 1975). Comedy exploited Deneuve's chic and independent persona to poke fun at the star, and in doing so, films such as *Le Sauvage* (Jean-Paul Rappeneau, 1975) implicitly questioned the hard-won emancipated status acquired by women and denounced the 'moral failure' of the women's movement – in *Le Sauvage* Deneuve is characterised as indomitable and domineering, but ultimately unable to manage her autonomy. Because Girardot best personified the strong woman archetype, she was gradually side-lined, as the popular representative of feminism and women who 'went too far' (Burnonville, 1992), an ideological backlash that hardened over the years and overthrew the image of the sexually liberated, independent, working, and often single woman of the 1970s. Girardot's last on-screen success was *La Clé sur la porte* (Yves Boisset) in 1978, based on feminist author Marie Cardinal. She then worked in different media (radio, theatre) with varying degree of success. While Girardot's film stardom declined, however, 1981 marked Deneuve's 'come-back' to the forefront with the success of *Le Dernier métro* (Le Gras, 2007a). The film and Deneuve's leading role present good comparison points to *La Banquière* and Schneider's, as both film came out a year apart and share a similar retro aesthetic. Although their narratives are set in the past (Occupation of France for the former, the 1920s for the latter), the two films speak of gender dynamics that were taking a retrograde turn in the early 1980s. Schneider and Deneuve perform active, working women who are celebrated for their wit, charisma, and resourcefulness throughout the films, yet masculine domination is strongly reinstated at the end in both cases. But while Deneuve's character offers a reassuring representation of female emancipation and presents a vision of femininity that is both modern and traditional (after taking over her husband's professional duties during the war, she gives him first place during the epilogue), Schneider's character is vehemently depreciated (Emma is imprisoned and murdered). After *Le Dernier métro*, Deneuve's persona continued to embody female emancipation with a 'reassuring' form of seduction that suggested the safe-keeping of traditional values – as 'officialised' in 1985 when she modelled for the bust of Marianne, the national emblem of the French Republic.

Schneider's on-screen persona expressed the exact same social contradictions regarding femininity, only in a more conservative fashion, and with the added morbid dimension of her vulnerable and tragic image. Gwénaëlle Le Gras (2005, p. 33) argues that the image of Deneuve presents a morbid aspect as well in combining eroticism and death, especially in *Tristana*, but while this dimension intensified for Schneider, it waned for Deneuve. Moreover, and unlike Deneuve, Schneider expressed inconsistent opinions in various media outlets with regards to the changes in women's lives. In fact, my research shows that her views on feminism, women's autonomy and body integrity tended to espouse the latest societal trend of the moment. Thus, if she signed the German equivalent of the 343 Manifesto in June 1971, which corresponded to her most feminist period, and while she voiced her support for the women's movement on occasions, her stance at the turn of the 1980s corresponded to the ambient resistance against feminism. Remarkably, her position was linked to what is still at the core of her French persona – vulnerability. However, by this she meant not her own (on- or off-screen) vulnerability, but that of men, whose 'fears and problems' called for 'a men's day' as she said in reaction to the formalisation of International Women's Day in France in March 1982 (Schneider and Seydel, 1989, p. 309); in other words, at that point she endorsed one of the key anti-feminist points of the period (that feminism was damaging men). The question of Schneider's feminism in terms of her potential legacy shall now be further addressed in the general conclusion of this study.

CONCLUSION

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The Legacy of Romy Schneider

My thesis analysed Romy Schneider's three-decade-long career as well as her on- and off-screen persona through a detailed examination of her films, of her characters, of the development of her performance style, and the proliferation of journalistic discourses and biographical works about her. Her career was divided into three major phases, which was the structure I chose to follow.

In Part I, which covered Schneider's first career from 1953 to 1959, I read her persona against the changing historical background of post-war Germanic cultures and examined at length how the young actress came to embody a consensual feminine idea of Germanicity, notably through her relationship with her mother. Before turning 20 years old, she had reached trans-European stardom through her representation of Elisabeth of Austria (or 'Sissi') in the *Sissi* trilogy of costume films (1955-57) that was extraordinarily well-received throughout western continental Europe (though not in English-speaking countries). Through her embodiment of Sissi, Schneider represented conservative feminine values such as tradition, virginity and wholesomeness, while channelling notions of hope and reconstruction (for the Germanic nations) and introducing hints of eroticism and the potentiality of a regulated sexuality for young women. The Sissi image was so potent and defining for Schneider that the star never really managed to distance herself from it – her subsequent roles and even the real-life Schneider were repeatedly compared to Sissi. As a result, she provoked controversy after she decided to turn her back on Sissi and we saw that subsequently her films and the European media presented her as still attached to traditional moral standards. Yet the defiant actress yearned for transgression and modernity, as illustrated off screen by her relationship with Alain Delon and her first move to Paris in 1958 (their relationship lasted until 1963).

Part II focused on the second, international phase of Schneider's career from 1960 to 1969, and I developed how her feminine identity changed towards a more glamourous and erotic persona. The period also marked an important change of dimension for her trans-European stardom as she crossed borders to make films in several European countries and in the US, and collaborated with European and American filmmakers in different genres and languages. After being a star of popular cinema with the *Sissi*s, she

became associated with international auteur films and sophisticated eroticism in international art films and Hollywood productions, most notably through her collaboration with Italian filmmaker Luchino Visconti and fashion designer Coco Chanel. I concluded Part II with an analysis of a new defining role and performance for Schneider as the unequivocally erotic and chic *Parisienne* in *La Piscine* alongside Delon, which led to Part III and her third and final turn of career in 1970s France where she achieved a new, major, *national* stardom.

In Part III, I analysed how Schneider's popularity was rooted in her characterisation as a 'modern' woman in Claude Sautet's films, which appeared to coincide with 1970s narratives of social and cultural progress, yet I showed that her characters' apparent emancipation and independence were deceptive. Schneider's on- and off-screen persona was representative of a *semblance* of liberation and modernity, as she embodied an unthreatening femininity (in patriarchal terms) acceptable to mainstream French cinema and society. Schneider's new, 'reassuring' image was built on her projection of a romantic and vulnerable identity, which was intrinsic to most of her characters, but also inscribed in her physique and performance – notably the use she made of her melancholy eyes and smile. I also examined the development of Schneider's combination of beauty and vulnerability towards the image of a tragic victim in French films about the German Occupation. Finally, I explored how Schneider's on-screen femininity went considerably darker in roles infused with excess, brutality, and morbidity, and how this was echoed by her increasingly difficult private life, marked by illness, loss and unhappiness. Although the turn of the 1980s was a time of social progress for women, on and off screen Schneider was depicted as a woman whose beauty was intrinsically linked to loss, spiralling down towards tragedy – I thus venture that her massive popularity in France during this period signals a form of cultural backlash towards women's social progress.

Emerging from my thorough examination of Schneider's stardom, I would argue that two concepts best describe her trajectory: consensus and paradox. Throughout my thesis, I have demonstrated that her image, though constantly developing, was defined by recurring opposing poles – tradition/modernity, past/future, obedient child/hopeful young woman, arrogant *bourgeoise*/erotic woman, vulnerability/sophistication, beauty/morbidity. It was Schneider's ability to embody such strong oppositions and reconcile such contradictions that made her an object of both fascination – verging on the

cultish – and popular affection. She was both endowed with a fixed identity, yet evolving over time, *balancing between extremes*, as her persona encompassed a wide range of female representations. In other words, there always was something for every member of her vast and diverse audiences to look for in terms of representation. While I argue that this explains her popularity at the time, this also begs the question of her legacy in terms of feminine image. There is an abundance of examples showing that Schneider is still 'present' in European popular culture 37 years after her death. In what ways is she remembered in the media today? The rest of this conclusion explores how the consensus/paradox duality applies to her legacy as well.

That Schneider generates a consensual following is illustrated in a number of ways. Every five years or so brings a new anniversary or a 'would-have-been' birthday and celebrations marked by the publication of new coffee-table books on her life and career, and the production of documentaries, biographies, DVD releases, and programming of her films on television. The broadcasting of the three *Sissi* films is a quasi-religious observance over the holiday period in many continental European countries. Small towns and large cities in Germany, Austria, France, Belgium, Czech Republic as well as Turkey, regularly organise exhibitions, and retrospectives in Film Institutes abound. The most attentive visitors at the Cinémathèque française in Paris will recognise her image on one of the entrance pillars, looking for a book in a library, from *What's New, Pussycat?* (1965). Schneider's face is one of the first pictures welcoming visitors at the Sisi museum at the Hofburg palace in Vienna. The European film industry celebrates the star too, with in France the Prix Romy Schneider, established in 1984, the most prestigious award for promising upcoming actresses in French cinema. And since 1990, the Austrian newspaper *Kurier* has organised the Romy Awards annually at the Hofburg in Vienna, to celebrate Austrian television and film. The trophy – named a Romy – is a gilded statuette of Schneider. In 2010 Schneider was part of the first batch of 40 German-speaking celebrities to have their stars on the Boulevard der Stars in Berlin (the German version of the Hollywood Walk of Fame). Furthermore, she has inspired two biopics: the TV film *Romy* (Torsten C. Fischer, 2009) was broadcast on German public television (2012 on French public television), and the recent German-Austrian-French co-production *3 Tage in Quiberon* (Emily Atef, 2018), was a critical and commercial success especially in Germany where it received seven Lola awards at the Deutscher Filmpreis in 2018 (including Best film and Best actress for Marie Bäumer in the role of Schneider). In France, however, the film provoked controversy as Schneider's daughter

Sarah Biasini and her father Daniel Biasini (Schneider's second husband) objected to the star's portrayal in the film – pointing to discrepancies in the construction of the star's image between her screen persona and her celebrity based on the more salacious aspects of her private life.

What *3 Tage in Quiberon* shows also, however, is the consensual hindsight view of Schneider as imbued with 'tragedy', a theme that informs most press discourse, especially in France. Alain Delon famously presented her with a posthumous Honorary César in 2008 (he asked the audience for a standing ovation to celebrate what 'should have been' Schneider's 70th birthday that year) and continues to speak publicly about their relationship, their pairing in *La Piscine* and his overall 'pain' at her evocation (interview by Laurent Delahousse, 11/12/2016). The eternal love myth (Part II, chapter 3) is thus still alive through Delon who endorsed the role of Schneider's widower. A typical comment from *Le Figaro* describes her as unhappy and ultimately 'stricken by destiny' (15/09/2018). Brigitte Bardot equally adopted this particular bias. In 2012 she referred to her own decision to stop her film career back in 1973 as caused by her not wanting to experience a tragic ending like Schneider, a historically inaccurate point, since Schneider's career was very successful at that time and the star's image was not marked by tragedy (*7sur7*, 21/02/2012; interview by Vincent Niclo, 01/01/2019). Further sealing Schneider as a tragic myth, Bardot brings forward another comparison with another star with a tragic aura, calling Schneider the 'Marilyn Monroe of Europe' (*Moustique*, 02/11/2015). Schneider and Monroe share an unexplained death at a young age (Monroe was 36), which means that their image froze, gaining more potency over time, an image preserved and cherished by the media and cohorts of fans[1] (I shall come back to Schneider's fandom below).

The legacy of Schneider as a tragic figure that dominates French media allies this tragic aspect with her 'radiant femininity', fashioning a particular version of the 'eternal feminine'. Many illustrations could be cited here. In the summer of 2018 the radio station France Inter broadcasted a series fronted by film critic Guillemette Odicino placing Schneider within a range of 'great tragic stars' (Odicino, 14-15/08/2018). In 2018 too, the cinema chain Pathé-Gaumont ran an ad featuring the soundtrack of the dialogue

[1] For more on a star's image youthfulness and its potency beyond death see Heather Addison (2005), Transcending time: Jean Harlow and Hollywood's narrative of decline, *Journal of Film and Video*, 57:4, pp. 32-46.

between Schneider and Philippe Noiret from the cult 'veil scene' in *Le Vieux fusil*, in which the Noiret character declares his love for her at first sight, a scene that comes as a flashback, once the spectator knows she was horrendously raped and killed by Nazi soldiers. These various retrospective manifestations reinforce the construction of an a-temporal image of Schneider, whose photogeny and erotic power are equated with vulnerability and tragedy. The media in France have thus construed the memory of Schneider as a timeless ideal of beautiful, suffering femininity.

Besides the print and audio-visual media, the memory of Schneider has been kept alive by masses of fans of all nationalities and generations, from distant admirers to the hard-core fans who started organising into regional groupings as early as 1955 with the European-wide distribution of *Sissi*. Announced in the French magazine *Jeunesse Cinéma*, the 'Club Romy Schneider-Sissi', the first official French fan club was founded in Paris in January 1960, followed by a provincial branch in Lyon. The members (male and female) gathered to go and see Schneider's films, discuss them, write her for autographs, and dance together (according to the club's secretary Jacqueline Demanest, some members met their life partner at the club, Bonini, 2001, p. 70). Two years later, the club started publishing a journal in order to keep its members informed about Schneider's and Delon's activities through diverse rubrics such as 'letters', 'opinions', 'humour', 'recipes', and 'latest news'. To my knowledge there was no German-speaking equivalent of such dedicated gathering. The club ceased to exist in 1965, coinciding with Schneider's return to Berlin.

Like all fans, Schneider's fans over the decades collected memorabilia associated to her career and private life – lobby cards, cinema programs, original film posters, photos and interviews in magazines. Since Schneider's death, they have organised outings to her grave in Boissy-sans-Avoir (a village west of Paris, where she bought a house shortly before her death). In Bavaria, there are trips to her childhood home in Schönau am Königssee (where in the past some went to meet Magda Schneider who lived there until her death in 1996), and where there has been, since 2015, the only permanent exhibition about the Schneider mother and daughter – assembled from a fan's collection. Several postage stamps have been issued since the 1990s (in Austria, Germany, France, Belgium, Gibraltar, Senegal, Netherlands) with Schneider's image on them, and streets in France, Germany and Austria are named after her, which is the result of fans' campaigning (Beaugrand, 2002). The arrival of the internet launched a plethora of websites, amateur

montage videos and, most recently, multi-language Facebook groups dedicated to Schneider.

From these eclectic manifestations of fandom, a few themes emerge within the star's legacy. First and foremost, they preserve her dual image of 'luminous beauty' and vulnerability. Schneider's fans, principally those of Germanic and French backgrounds who largely outnumber other nationalities such as Italians for example, are eager to share photographs that show Schneider at her best. For the fan community, this means favouring the French part of her career over the earlier two phases, including the Sissi period. Interestingly, although the trilogy is extremely popular amongst fans and photographs of Schneider in costumes and anecdotes of that time are posted and largely shared, there are variations in this respect. The specific types of fandom branching out from the *Sissi* films' reception remain unexplored territories. As discussed, there have been studies of the queer reception of the trilogy, but the young female audiences who seem particularly appreciative of the films would require an empirical and systematic study in itself – I have only been able to touch on this here, but this topic could provide a fruitful subject for further study. My chapter on the *Sissi* films has shown that the Sissi/Romy figure had a greater success on the Germanic side during the 1950s. This appears to have endured over time, albeit slightly sliding towards the former Eastern block (Hungary, Czech Republic) whose audiences only discovered Schneider after 1989 through the *Sissi* cycle. On the other hand, French fans are adamant that they 'stay true' to Schneider by honouring what they see as her 'aspiration' to move away from the Sissi image, by not dwelling on those films. Hence the overwhelming presence on French internet sites of Schneider's French period from *La Piscine* onwards. The core of Schneider's fan base is also on the look-out for any sensationalist output that might 'disrupt' the memory of the star, i.e. any new information likely to detract from the beautiful/vulnerable narrative. The latest example concerns German journalist and feminist Alice Schwarzer's French translation and edition of her biography of Schneider (2018). Schwarzer adopts a provocative position by 'sharing' new facts about Schneider's life and career, notably her alleged bisexuality. Schwarzer's 'revelations' caused an uproar amongst fans of Schneider in France[2], not so much because of their nature, but

[2] The impact of such revelations was less important in Germany when the original German edition came out in 1998, mostly because Schwarzer's book on Schneider draws on the biography written by Michael Jürgs in 1991 (in which he already alluded to the star's sexuality).

because she 'betrayed' Schneider's memory by doing so, going against her 'last wish' to be 'left alone' (interview by Michel Drucker, 14/04/1982) – as the star said in her last and memorable TV appearance after the death of her son in which she forcefully denounced the intrusion of paparazzis who infamously dressed up as nurses to photograph David's body in the hospital.

The 'tragic mother' image is thus a particular subtheme that most deeply affects Schneider's fans of all nationalities, and the impulse to read her persona retrospectively is probably what defines best her fandom today – the most dedicated fans are up in arms against those they view as 'responsible' for Schneider's life-long misery. In this respect, while there seems to be a negative consensus around her second husband Daniel Biasini, Delon remains a highly controversial, polarising figure amongst fans of Schneider, as is Magda Schneider. What Romy Schneider's fans see in these three individuals is, respectively, breach of trust[3], abandonment, and exploitation, all three elements foretelling the final tragedy – the death of her son, precipitating her own. The case of Magda Schneider also illustrates the complicated relation experienced by her daughter between France and West Germany. While Magda embodies the misogynistic stereotype of the powerful and abusive mother who used her daughter's fame to her own advancement, she also brings in a difficult political issue. In the French media and part of German-speaking media, Magda is portrayed as a Nazi sympathizer (I have argued that her involvement with the Nazi elites – rather than politics – was more ignorant and self-interested than ideology-driven). As the history of the Nazi era continues to dominate views of Germany, in France as elsewhere, the negative and accusatory discourse on Magda impacts on the legacy of her daughter, painting her as the victim of a mother demonized by her association with the historical arch-enemy.

The relation between France and Germany leads me to the more paradoxical aspects of the star's legacy. Indeed, Schneider's gender representations spoke to different national audiences at different times (hearty and demure femininity for Germanic cultures

[3] Schneider's fans consider that he married her for financial reasons and her film business connections, that he did nothing to help her when her alcohol consumption allegedly turned into an addiction in the mid-to-late-1970s, and that he did not protect their daughter Sarah from the press after Schneider's death (he shared private photographs with popular outlets, organised photoshoots with Sarah who was pictured on the covers of several magazines, and they appeared together on television until her late teens). Sarah Biasini is now an actress based in Paris.

during the 1950s, glamorous eroticism in the 1960s, vulnerable sophistication in 1970s France). Her success in Occupation films in France and lack thereof in West Germany created a persona polarised between two national receptions, enhancing and capitalising on her Germanness on the French side. Her roles in Occupation films represented a redemptive way to atone for Germany's violent past, through her embodiment of glamorous suffering. This is certainly an important part of her persona still held up high in French media today since these roles in Occupation films made especially clear the idea that she *chose* France for 'freedom', for love and to lead her adult life, as well as for her career (Morice, 15/09/2018). They represent also the moment, the 1970s, when Schneider sparked the interest of feminist journalists and scholars in continental Europe, although their interpretations evidenced a degree of disagreement.

Two positions emerged. For some, Schneider was a victim of patriarchy both in her private life and in her screen identity. I have discussed this view in chapter 2 of Part II about Schneider's Occupation films. In her chapter about the construction of the Schneider myth in 1970s West Germany, Nina Zimnik (2005) argues that her star persona was instrumentalised by West German feminists as being both representative of the feminist movement and an example of patriarchal victimisation. A notable example of the latter representation is Schwarzer's biography of Schneider entitled *Romy Schneider: Mythos und Leben* (1998, translated into French in 2018). Holding Schneider has a victim of patriarchy is one way to defend her as a feminist, but yet again, tragic figure. Other feminist critics claimed on the contrary that Schneider was an example of a woman who followed her desires and thrived in a male-dominated environment by being determined and committed enough to build a new identity, without regard for repercussions (Jürgs, 1991), and who exhibited honesty and hypersensitivity in performances and interviews. This (minority) view sees a strength in Schneider's personality, which it is argued is also shared, to some extent, by contemporary actresses, including recipients of the Prix Romy Schneider such as Vanessa Paradis, Audrey Dana, Julie Gayet, or another successful German 'export' Diane Kruger (as is claimed in the documentary *Romy Schneider, eine Frau in Drei noten, une femme en trois notes*, 2008). A number of working actresses today cite Schneider as their model, mentioning how inspired they are by the star's acting style, and in particular how Schneider 'went beyond her beauty' to deliver energetic and sincere performances (interview with Julie Gayet by Claire Chazal, 11/02/2019). But mostly, they praise Schneider for her 'eternal quest for perfection' that they view as both an asset (perfection here meaning ambition) and a typically *female* quality. Others, such

as Isabelle Huppert, value how unapologetic and demanding Schneider came across, as she expressed her disapproval at male directors who mistreated her and her female colleagues on set (*Vanity Fair*, 13/12/2018). Although they acknowledge the excesses of celebrity culture, including the intrusive media presence, these actresses fail to recognise the authoritarian dimension of some filmmakers Schneider worked with (such as Visconti, Preminger and Żuławski) and the climate thereby created in the film world, which we would in some cases call abusive today – something we are more aware of in the post-#*metoo* era. In the French context though, such oblivious reactions to Schneider can be read as symptomatic of the greater reluctance to embrace certain feminist struggles and in particular the controversies sparked in the wake of the #*balancetonporc* campaign.[4] Commentators tend to brush such power relations aside and focus instead on her *emotional* performance style, consequently trivialising Schneider's suffering, seen as essential to her approach to roles and acting.

One major paradox of Schneider's career and legacy is that, despite her success as a trans-European star, she has been largely absent from English-speaking film culture. While there is no single, conclusive, reason to explain this phenomenon, I wish to offer some tentative thoughts to address this question. First of all, Schneider's biggest success and for a significant part of her audience and fans, her most cherished work, the *Sissi* films, did not export to English-speaking countries. This was partly because the historical figure on which the title character is based is largely unknown in Anglo-American culture, where British monarchy figures are the subject of much literary and film fiction. By contrast, both Elisabeth of Austria and her screen embodiment by Schneider are popular not only in continental Europe, but also in Latin America and parts of Asia. Secondly, it seems fairly clear that the *Sissi* cycle did not export across the English Channel and the Atlantic because of the Anglo-American construction of post-war Austrian identity. The intention to distance Austria from its Nazi past was also, ostensibly, in evidence domestically (see Part I, chapter 1), yet the execution differed. In fact, as Hametz and Schlipphacke point out, many Americans shared the European adoration for Elisabeth in the first years of the 20th century (p. 21), but the two World Wars changed Anglo-American perspectives regarding the Habsburgs and the 1950s 'Habsburg nostalgia'

[4] See Christine Bard (2018), La tribune signée par Deneuve est l'expression d'un antiféminisme, *Le Monde*, 11 January.

(Fritsche, 2013, p. 71) never took off as it did in Austria. *The Emperor Waltz* (Billy Wilder, 1948) for example is almost forgotten, and the condensed English-language version of the three *Sissi* films entitled *Forever My Love* released by American distributors in 1962 went practically unnoticed (the critic from *The New York Times* called the film 'visually striking', yet 'simple-minded', and dismissed the – dubbed – 'kindergarten dialogue' as 'plain ludicrous', 28/03/1962). Three years later, *The Sound of Music* (Robert Wise, 1965), on the other hand, offered a more acceptable version of Austrian identity for global audiences. First of all, it provided concrete evidence to support the 'portrayal of Austria as Hitler's "first victim" and as a site of anti-Nazi resistance' (Hametz and Schlipphacke, 2018, p. 22) and on the other hand it was in English, with a British-born Hollywood star, Julie Andrews. Thus, Schneider as a star was not able to capitalise on the success of the *Sissi* compilation film in the way Julie Andrews was with *The Sound of Music*, and her subsequent 'export' to English-speaking countries suffered from this.

As for Schneider's post-Sissi period, I discussed in Part II how and why her career in Hollywood and Britain never really took off – a combination of several factors such as her films' lack of distribution overseas, even though, contrary to many French or Italian stars in Hollywood, language aptitude was not the issue. Schneider successfully toned down her German accent, as can be heard in the films and as was noticed by US critics. In addition, other events kept her out of the Anglo-American film market. Following her separation from Delon she broke her contract with Columbia and returned to Europe to be with her family. Then, after the triumph of *La Piscine*, she was content with the success of her career in France, where she had become a major figure. She also yearned for home and family stability, and thus did not wish to travel (her regular round trips between Berlin and Paris before her definitive resettling in Paris in 1973 took a toll on her personal life). Finally, her 1970s French films, especially the persona-defining works directed by Sautet, did not export to Anglophone markets either, as they presented a social dimension finely embedded in their French context, while they also foregrounded French-language performances around Schneider, by the likes of Yves Montand, Michel Piccoli and Philippe Noiret.[5] Schneider's own eloquent use of French enabled her to attain trans-

[5] By contrast, later Sautet films lost their social anchorage and focused on characters' interiority. His last two films *Un cœur en hiver* (1992) and *Nelly et Monsieur Arnaud* (1995) were art-house hits that did a lot for the international career of Emmanuelle Béart.

European stardom, but this did not translate into transnational success. This missed opportunity on the international art cinema market was matched by a trend in popular cinema which saw, in the 1970s, the increasing hold of Hollywood stars across the globe. Schneider's at first surprising absence from Anglo-American film culture is thus understandable through a combination of cultural, political, personal and industrial factors.

Nonetheless, and fortunately, a few factors contradict this picture. First, having worked with international auteurs of the calibre of Visconti, Welles and Preminger, Schneider built a reputation as an art cinema actress at the beginning of the 1960s that has endured, as the films of these directors have – *Ludwig, The Trial, The Cardinal*. Moreover, since 2007 the *Sissi*s have become available in the US (along with *Mädchenjahre einer Königin* and *Forever My Love*) in their original and restored version. The trailer for the Film Movement Classic DVD collection puts Schneider centre stage, reading: 'featuring Romy Schneider in the role that made her a star'. If Schneider remains known in the US and Great-Britain mostly to an eclectic niche of art film *cinephiles*, as well as scholars and aficionados of popular historical cinema, the enhanced distribution of films through digitalisation can only bring better exposure to the films and talent of Romy Schneider. I hope that this study can contribute to this process.

I started this thesis by wishing to show the singularity of Romy Schneider's star persona and to connect her trajectory to the mechanics of trans-European and transnational stardom. As scholarship on German, French, trans-European and transnational stardom and star systems continues to grow, I hope that this thesis also contributes useful material to these areas, with its consideration of a popular and prolific European actress. Beyond the necessity to examine Schneider with regards to her absence in scholarly studies, this thesis has demonstrated how a star comes to embody changing and complex depictions of femininity through several post-war European cinemas. It has also shown that examining the larger social and cultural implications of such representations underlines the important place of European female stars as a record of the history and experiences of women in Western European cultures.

APPENDIX 1: Romy Schneider's timeline

1938 Born 23rd September in Vienna. Moves to Schönau am Königssee, Bavaria

1941 Birth of brother Wolf

1944 Starts school in Schönau am Königssee

1945 Divorce of Magda Schneider and Wolf Albach-Retty

1949 Starts school at Goldenstein boarding school near Salzbourg

1953 First film. Mother Magda remarries to Hans Herbert Blatzheim

1955 'Sissi mania' starts in December

1958 First audition in Hollywood. Meets Alain Delon and moves to Paris

1959 German Film Awards nomination (Best actress for *Mädchen in Uniform*). Official engagement with Delon in front of the press

1960 Meets Luchino Visconti

1961 First theatre play *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, directed by Visconti, Théâtre de Paris

1962 European tour with *La Mouette*, directed by Sacha Pitoëff

1963 Breakup with Delon. Etoile de Cristal de l'Académie du Cinéma (Best foreign actress for *The Trial*)

1964 Golden Globe nomination (Best actress for *The Cardinal*)

1966 Moves to Berlin, marries Harry Meyen, birth of David Haubenstock

1967 Death of Wolf Albach-Retty

1968 Death of Blatzheim. *La Piscine*

1969 Meets Claude Sautet

1971 Signs the petition 'Wir haben abgetrieben!' in *Stern* magazine

1973 Moves to Paris, separation from Meyen

1975 Divorces Meyen, marries Daniel Biasini

1976 Best actress at the César Awards for *L'Important c'est d'aimer*

1977 Best actress at the German Film Awards for *Gruppenbild mit Dame*. Birth of Sarah Biasini

1979 Suicide of Meyen. Best actress at the César Awards and special David di Donatello award for *Une histoire simple*

1981 Divorces Daniel Biasini. Right kidney removed. David Haubenstock dies on 5th July

1982 Dies in the night of 28th-29th May

APPENDIX 2: The *Sissi* films across continental Europe

	RS films prior releases to Sissi 1	Release dates			Box office		
		Sissi 1	Sissi 2	Sissi 3	Sissi 1	Sissi 2	Sissi 3
Austria	. Wenn der weiße Flieder wieder blüht (December 1953) . Mädchenjahre einer Königin (December 1954) . Die Deutschmeister (September 1955)	21.12.1955	December 1956	1957	10 millions at the premiere (unconfirmed)	Bigger success that the first film	
West Germany	. Wenn der weiße Flieder wieder blüht (November 1953) . Feuerwerk (September 1954) . Mädchenjahre einer Königin (December 1954) . Die Deutschmeister (August 1955) . Der Letzte Mann (October 1955)	22.12.1955	19.12.1956	18.12.1957	12 millions, 1st place (1955-56)	2nd place (1956-57)	3rd place (1957-58)
Belgium	. Mädchenjahre einer Königin (December 1955) . Der Letzte Mann (February 1956)	30.03.1956	29.03.1957	18.04.1958		447,000 Bfr (Brussels only: 337,000 Bfr)	
Denmark	Mädchenjahre einer Königin (March 1956)	31.08.1956	24.04.1957	18.04.1958			
Finland	Feuerwerk (February 1956), Mädchenjahre einer Königin (July 1956)	28.09.1956	22.03.1957	21.03.1957			
France	. Feuerwerk (May 1956) . Mädchenjahre einer Königin (May 1956 AND re-release in March 1957 in Paris) . Die Deutschmeister (January 1956)	01.03.1957	16.08.1957	10.09.1958	6,497,043	1,275,021	5,149,522
Greece			February-March 1957				
Italy		Christmas 1956					
Netherlands	Wenn der weiße Flieder wieder blüht (March 1954)	18.05.1956					
Norway		01.04.1956	01.08.1957	X			X
Portugal		2.10.1956	23.04.1957		85,000		
Spain		28.04.1956	24.06.1957	1974 (re-release?)	1,527,872	890,835	
Sweden	. Feuerwerk (February 1955) . Mädchenjahre einer Königin (October 1955)	12.03.1956	4.02.1957	10.03.1958			

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